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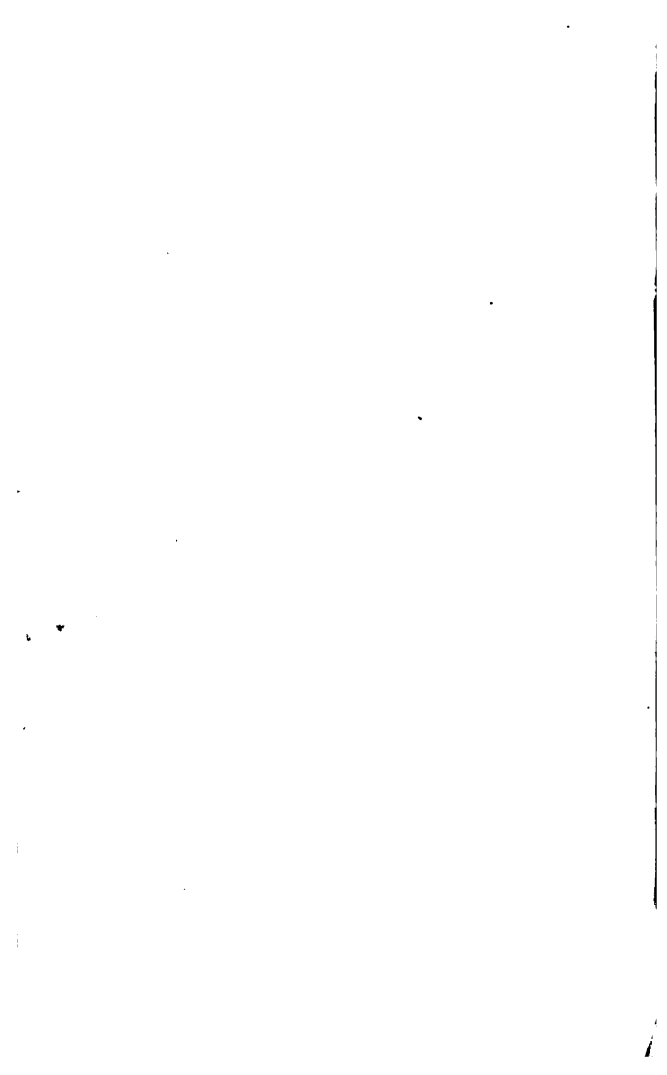
A PLAY BY
ALEX DUMAS

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**THE
TOWER OF NESLE**



THE
TOWER OF NESLE

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

AND IN NINE TABLEAUX

By

ALEX. DUMAS

Author of "The Three Musketeers"

in conjunction with Frédéric Gailhardet

Translated by Adam L. Gowans, M.A.

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**THE
TOWER OF NESLE**

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

PORTE-SAINT-MARTIN—May 29, 1832

<i>Buridan,</i>	MM. BOCAGE
<i>Gaultier d'Aulnay,</i>	LOCKROY
<i>Phillipe d'Aulnay,</i>	...	..	...	...	DELAFOSSÉ
<i>Orsini,</i>	...	...	...	...	AUGUSTE
<i>Savoisy,</i>	...	..	...	...	PROVOST
<i>Louis X.,</i>	...	...	...	...	CHILLY
<i>De Pierrefonds,</i>	...	...	...	...	MONVAL
<i>Richard,</i>	...	...	...	...	MOESSARD
<i>Enguerrand de Marigny,</i>	...	...	...	...	AUGUSTE Z.
<i>Landry,</i>	...	...	..	...	SERRES
<i>Simon,</i>	...	...	...	...	HÉRÉT
<i>Sire Raoul,</i>	...	...	...	...	DAVÈSNE
<i>Jehan,</i>	...	...	...	...	MARCHAND
<i>A Crossbowman,</i>	...	...	...	...	LAINÉ
<i>A Guard,</i>	...	...	...	...	VISSOT
<i>A Page,</i>	...	...	...	...	ERNEST
<i>Marguerite of Burgundy,</i>	...	...	...	...	MILLES. GEORGES
<i>Charlotte,</i>	...	...	...	...	LAINÉ
<i>A Veiled Woman,</i>	...	...	...	...	ODD
<i>Pages, Guards, Plebeians.</i>					

SCENE, PARIS, 1314

THE TOWER OF NESLE

ACT I

PHILIPPE D'AULNAY

FIRST TABLEAU

The interior of Orsini's Tavern at the Porte Saint-Honoré. A dozen plebeians and workmen at tables to the spectator's right; at a separate table, Philippe d'Aulnay, writing on a parchment; he has a pot of wine and a goblet beside him.

SCENE I

PHILIPPE D'AULNAY, RICHARD, SIMON, JEHAN, Plebeians; then ORSINI, then LANDRY.

Rich. [Rising.] Hallo! Master Orsini, landlord, devil's inn-keeper, double poisoner! it seems one must give you all your names before you answer.

Ors. What do you want? wine?

Sim. [Rising.] Thanks, we have some still; it is Richard the cobbler who wants to know how many souls your master Satan has received this morning.

Rich. Or, to speak more Christianly, how many dead bodies have been picked up on the banks of the Seine, from the Tower of Nesle to the Bons-Hommes.

Ors. Three.

Rich. Just the number! And all three, no doubt, noble, young and handsome?

Ors. All three noble, young and handsome.

Rich. As usual; Strangers all three to the good town of Paris?...

Ors. All three arrived within the week.

Rich. As the custom is... This scourge has this of good, at least, about it, that it is quite different from the plague and from royalty: it falls on the gentlemen and spares the plebeians. That is some consolation for taxation and forced labour.—Thanks, inn-keeper; that is all we wished of you, unless in your quality of Italian and sorcerer, you are good enough to tell us who the vampire is that needs so much young and warm blood to keep his own from growing old and congealing...

Ors. I know nothing about it.

Sim. And why it is always below the Tower of Nesle, and never above, that the drowned men are found...

Ors. I know nothing about it.

Phil. [Calling Orsini.] Landlord!

Sim. You know nothing about it? Very well then, leave us in peace and answer that young gentleman, who does you the honour of calling you.

Phil. Landlord!

Ors. Sir?

Phil. Can one of your servants carry this letter, for these two sous?

Ors. Landry!... Landry!

Land. [Advancing.] Here.

[He stands before Philippe, while the latter seals the letter and addresses it.]

Ors. Do what this young gentleman tells you.

[He moves away.]

Rich. *[Catching Orsini by the arm.]* All the same, landlord; if I was called Orsini, which God forbid! if I was landlord of this tavern, which God grant! and if my windows looked, as yours do, on that old Tower of Nesle, which may God destroy! I should like to pass one of my nights, only one, in watching and in listening, and I warrant you that on the morrow I should know what to answer to those who asked me for information.

Ors. That is not my trade. Do you want wine? I am an inn-keeper and not a night-watcher.

Rich. Go to the devil!

Ors. Let me go, then.

Rich. That is reasonable. *[Exit Orsini.]*

Phil. *[To Landry.]* Listen, lad: take these two sous and go to the Louvre; you will ask for Captain Gaultier d'Aulnay and hand him this letter.

Land. It shall be done, sir. *[Exit.]*

Rich. Tell me, Jehan de Montlhe'ry, did you see the cortege of Queen Marguerite and her two sisters, Princesses Blanche and Jeanne?

Jeh. I should think so!

Rich. There is no need now to ask where the tax has gone that King Philippe the Handsome, of glorious memory, raised on the day he made his elder son, Louis the Quarrelsome, a knight; I recognised my thirty sous on the back of the Queen's favourite; only, from hard coin, they had become fine cloth of gold. Have you seen Gaultier d'Aulnay, Simon?

[Philippe raises his head and listens.]

Sim. Holy Virgin, have I seen him?... His

devilish horse caracoled so well, that it put one of its feet on mine, as straight down as if it was playing at 'ox-foot;' and as I cried for help, its master, to make me be quiet, gave me...

Jeb. A gold crown?

Sim. Yes! a blow with the hilt of his sword on my pate, calling me a clown.

Jeb. And you did nothing to the horse and said nothing to the master?

Sim. For the horse, I virtuously buried three inches of this knife in its rump, and it went away bleeding; as for the master, I called him bastard, and he went away swearing.

Phil. [*From his place.*] Who says that Gaultier d'Aulnay is a bastard?

Sim. I.

Phil. [*Throwing his goblet at his head.*] You have lied in the throat, you rascal.

Sim. Help, children!

The Plebeians. [*Seizing their knives.*] Kill the favourite!...the gentleman!...the dandy!

Phil. [*Drawing his sword.*] Take care, my masters! take note that my sword is longer and of better steel than your knives.

Sim. Yes; but we have ten knives against your sword.

Phil. Back!

All. Kill him! Kill him!

[*They form a circle round Philippe, who parries with his sword.*]

SCENE II

The Same, BURIDAN.

He enters, lays down his cloak quietly; then, observing that there is a gentleman defending himself against plebeians, he draws his sword with alacrity.

Bur. Ten against one!... Ten clowns against one gentleman, it is five too many.

[He attacks them from behind.

The Plebeians. Murder!... Watch!

[They try to escape; Orsini appears.

Bur. Devil's inn-keeper, shut your door, lest any of these rascals get out to give the alarm: they were wrong... *[To the Plebeians.]* You were wrong.

The Plebeians. Yes, my lord, yes.

Bur. You see, we pardon them. Remain at your tables; this is ours... Bid my friend Landry bring some wine.

Ors. He is out on an errand for this young gentleman; I shall have the honour of serving you myself.

Bur. As you please; but make haste. *[Turning towards the Plebeians.]* Is there anyone speaking over there?

The Plebeians. No, my lord.

Phil. By my patron saint, sir, you have just freed me from an awkward position, and I will remember that on a like occasion if I find you in one.

Bur. Your hand?

Phil. Most willingly.

Bur. All is said. *[Orsini brings wine in pots.]* Your health!... Carry two pots of that to those

knaves, that they may drink to ours... Good. [*To Philippe.*] It is the first time, young soldier, that I have seen you in Master Orsini's venerable tavern; are you a new-comer to the good town of Paris?

Phil. I arrived here two hours ago, just in time to see Queen Marguerite's cortege pass.

Bur. Queen? Not yet.

Phil. Queen the day after to-morrow; it is the day after to-morrow that His Majesty King Louis X. arrives from Navarre to succeed his father, Philippe the Fair, and I have profited by his accession to the throne to return from Flanders, where I was at the wars.

Bur. And I from Italy, where I was fighting also. It seems that the same reason brings us, sir?

Phil. I am seeking my fortune.

Bur. So am I. And your means of success?

Phil. My brother has been a captain, for six months, in attendance on Queen Marguerite.

Bur. His name?

Phil. Gaultier d'Aulnay.

Bur. You will succeed, sir knight; for the Queen can refuse nothing to your brother.

Phil. So they say: and I have just written to him to announce my arrival and tell him to join me here.

Bur. Here, in the midst of this crowd?

Phil. Look.

Bur. Ah! our friends have all disappeared.

Phil. Let us continue, since they leave us free. And may I ask *your* name?

Bur. My name?... Say my names; I have two: one a birth-name, which is mine and which

I do not bear ; one a *nom de guerre*, which is not mine and which I bear.

Phil. And which will you tell me ?

Bur. My *nom de guerre*, Buridan.

Phil. Buridan... Have you any friend at Court ?

Bur. No one.

Phil. Your resources ?

Bur. Are there [*he strikes his forehead*] and there [*he strikes his breast*], in my head and in my heart.

Phil. You count upon your good looks and on love ; you are right, sir knight.

Bur. I count upon something else besides ; I am of the same age, of the same country, as the Queen... I was page of Duke Robert II., her father, who died assassinated... The Queen and I had not at that time, between us, the years that each of us now has.

Phil. What is your age ?

Bur. Thirty-five.

Phil. Well ?

Bur. Well, there has been, since that time, a secret between Marguerite of Burgundy and myself...a secret which will kill me, young man, or which will make my fortune.

Phil. [*Handing him his goblet to drink.*] Good luck !

Bur. God give it to you in return, soldier !

Phil. Mine has not begun badly.

Bur. Ah !

Phil. Yes ; to-day, as I was returning from watching the Queen's cortege pass, I perceived that I was followed by a woman. I slackened my pace and she quickened hers... By the time you could turn an hour-glass upside down she was beside me.

'My young lord,' she said, 'a lady who loves the sword thinks you not ill-looking; are you as brave as you are handsome? are you as confiding as you are brave?'—'If your lady,' I replied, 'needs only a heart that can pass without beating through danger to reach love... I am her man, provided always that she is young and beautiful; if not, let her commend herself to Saint Catherine and go into a convent.' 'She is young and she is beautiful.' 'Very well.' 'She awaits you to-night.' 'Where?' 'Be at the corner of Froid-Mantel Street at the hour of the curfew; a man will approach you, and say, "Your hand?" You will show him this ring and you will follow him. Adieu, soldier, be bold and be happy!...' Then she put this ring on my finger and disappeared.

Bur. You will go to this rendezvous?

Phil. By my patron saint, I shall take care not to fail!

Bur. My dear friend, I congratulate you... I have been at Paris four days longer than you, and excepting Landry, who is an old war acquaintance, I have not come across one face to which I could put a name... Sang-Dieu! Yet I am not of an age or of a figure to have no more adventures.

SCENE III

The Same, a Veiled Woman.

The Veiled Woman. [*Entering and touching Buridan on the shoulder with her hand.*] Sir captain...

Bur. [*Turning round without changing his place.*] What is the matter, my good woman?

Wom. Two words in a whisper.

Bur. Why not aloud?

Wom. Because there are only two words to say, and there are four ears to hear.

Bur. [*Rising.*] Very well... Take my arm, stranger, and tell me the two words... [*To Phil.*] You permit me?...

Phil. By all means!

Wom. A lady who loves the sword thinks you not ill-looking; are you as brave as you are handsome? are you as confiding as you are brave?

Bur. I have made war on the Italians, the greatest rascals I know, for twenty years; I have made love to the Italian ladies, the slyest wantons I am acquainted with, for twenty years...and I have never refused either combat or rendezvous, provided the man had the right to wear spurs and a gold chain...provided the woman was young and pretty.

Wom. She is young, she is beautiful.

Bur. Good.

Wom. And she awaits you to-night.

Bur. Where, and at what hour?

Wom. In front of the second tower of the Louvre...at the hour of the curfew.

Bur. I will be there.

Wom. A man will come to you and say: 'Your hand?' You will show him this ring and you will follow him... Adieu, captain; be bold and be happy!

[Exit veiled woman. The night begins to fall quietly.]

Bur. Well then! it is a dream or a wager.

Phil. What is?

Bur. That veiled woman...

Phil. What then?

Bur. She has just repeated to me the words that a veiled woman said to you.

Phil. A rendezvous?

Bur. Like yours.

Phil. The hour?

Bur. The same as yours.

Phil. And a ring?

Bur. Like yours.

Phil. Let me see it?

Bur. Look.

Phil. There is witchcraft in this... And you will go?

Bur. I will go.

Phil. They are two sisters.

Bur. So much the better! We shall be brothers-in-law.

Land. [*At the door.*] This way, sir.

[*After having introduced Gaultier d'Aulnay, he goes into Orsini's room.—Night.*]

SCENE IV

BURIDAN, PHILIPPE and GAULTIER D'AULNAY.

Phil. Hush! here is Gaultier... Come to my arms, brother! [*He holds out his arms.*]

Gaul. [*Throwing himself into them.*] Your hand, brother... Ah! it is you, then! It is you, really you?

Phil. Why, yes!

Gaul. Do you love me always?

Phil. As the half of myself.

Gaul. And you are right, brother. Embrace me again... Who is this man?

Phil. A friend of an hour's standing, who has done me a service that I will remember all my life : he rescued me from the hands of a dozen rascals, at whose heads I had hurled a curse and a goblet, because they were speaking ill of you.

Gaul. Ah ! thanks for him, thanks for myself. [*To Buridan.*] If Gaultier d'Aulnay can be of any service to you, should he be praying at his mother's tomb (and God grant that he may know her some day !), should he be at his mistress's knees (and may God preserve her !), at your first call, he will rise, he will go to you, and if you have need of his blood or his life, he will give you them as he gives you his hand.

Bur. You love one another devoutly, gentlemen, as it appears ?

Phil. Yes ; you see, captain, it is because we have no one else in the world, he, than me ; I, than him ; for we are twins and without parents, with a red cross on the left arm for all token of recognition ; we were exposed together on the steps of Notre-Dame ; we have been hungry and cold together, and we have been warmed and satisfied together.

Gaul. And since that time, our longest separations have been for six months ; and when he dies, I will die too ; for as he came into the world only a few hours before me, I must not survive him more than a few hours. These things are written, believe that ; and so, between us, we own everything jointly, nothing alone ; our horse, our purse, our sword at a sign, our life at a word.—*Au revoir*, captain.—Come to my house, brother.

Phil. Not so, my friend ; I must pass this night somewhere where I am expected.

Gaul. Arrived two hours ago and you have a rendezvous for to-night? Beware, brother! [*Two waiters pass and begin closing the shutters.*] for some time the Seine has carried many corpses, the shore has received many bodies; but it is of stranger gentlemen especially that the bloody harvest has been gathered each day on the river-banks. Beware, brother, beware!

Phil. Do you hear, captain; will you go?

Bur. I will go.

Phil. And I too.

Gaul. How long ago did you arrive, captain?

Bur. Five days ago.

Gaul. [*Meditating.*] You two hours ago, he five days ago...you quite young, he young still... Do not go, my friends, do not go!

Phil. We have promised, promised on our honour.

Gaul. A promise is sacred... Go then; but to-morrow, to-morrow, in the morning, brother...

Phil. Be easy.

Gaul. [*Turning and taking Buridan's hand.*] You, whenever you please, sir.

Bur. Thanks. [*The curfew bell is heard.*]

Ors. [*Entering.*] There is the curfew, gentlemen.

Bur. [*Taking his cloak and going out.*] Adieu! I am expected at the second tower of the Louvre.

Phil. [*Doing likewise.*] I, at Froid-Mantel Street.

Gaul. I, at the Palace.

Ors. [*Alone.*] [*He closes the door and blows a whistle; Landry and three men appear.*] And we, children, at the Tower of Nesle.

SECOND TABLEAU

Circular interior. Two doors on the actor's right, in the foreground; one on the left; a window in the background with a balcony; a dressing-table, chairs, arm-chairs.

SCENE I

ORSINI, alone, leaning against the window. Thunder is heard and lightning seen.

A fine night for a debauch at the tower! The sky is black, rain is falling, the town sleeps, the river is swollen as if to welcome dead bodies... It is fine weather for love-making: the noise of thunder without; the clink of glasses within, kisses and loving speeches... Strange concert in which God and Satan take their parts! [*Shouts of laughter are heard.*] Laugh, young fools, laugh away! as for me, I wait; you have still an hour to laugh, and I an hour to wait, as I waited yesterday, as I shall wait to-morrow. What inexorable conditions! because their eyes have seen what they should not have seen, their eyes must grow dim! because their lips have received and given kisses that they ought neither to have received nor given, their lips must be silent, never to re-open except as accusers before the throne of God!... But woe! woe a hundred times deserved; to those imprudent ones who rise at the first call of a nocturnal love! presumptuous youths, who think it a very simple thing to come by night, in a raging storm, with bandaged eyes, into this old Tower of Nesle, to find there three young and beautiful women, to say to them 'I love you,'

and to intoxicate themselves with wine, with caresses and with pleasures along with them.

A Night Watchman. [Without.] Two of the clock, rain falls, all is well. Parisians, sleep.

Ors. Two o'clock, already !

SCENE II

ORSINI, LANDRY.

Land. Master !

Ors. What do you want ?

Land. It is two o'clock in the morning ; the night watchman has just passed.

Ors. Well, we are still far from day.

Land. But the others are getting weary.

Ors. They are paid.

Land. Saving your good pleasure, master, they are paid to strike and not to wait. If this is how things are to be, let them double the sum : so much for waiting, so much for assassination.

Ors. Silence ; some one comes ; be gone.

Land. I go ; but what I have said to you is none the less true. [Exit.

SCENE III

ORSINI, MARGUERITE.

Marg. Orsini !

Ors. Madam ?

Marg. Where are your men ?

Ors. There.

Marg. Ready ?

Ors. Quite ready, madam, quite ready... The night is wearing on.

Marg. Is it so late, then?

Ors. The storm is dying away.

Marg. Yes; listen to the thunder.

Ors. The day is about to dawn.

Marg. You mistake, Orsini; see, the night is still dark... Oh! [*She sits down.*]

Ors. No matter, madam, we must put out the torches, pick up the cushions, put past the bottles. Your boats await you; you must recross the Seine, re-enter your noble dwelling, and leave us masters here, sole masters.

Marg. Oh, let me alone: this night does not resemble the nights that went before; this youth does not resemble the other youths: he resembles one alone, so much above all! Do you not think so, Orsini?

Ors. Whom does he resemble?

Marg. My Gaultier d'Aulnay. Sometimes I caught myself, as I looked at him, thinking I saw my Gaultier; as I listened to him, thinking I heard my Gaultier. He is a child made all of love and passion; he is a child who cannot be dangerous, is it not so?

Ors. Oh! madam, what are you saying? Reflect that he is a plaything that must be seized and broken; that the more kindness and lack of reserve you have shown to him, the more he is to be feared... It will soon be three o'clock, madam; retire and abandon this young man to us.

Marg. [*Rising.*] Abandon him to you, Orsini? No, no; he is mine. Go and ask my sisters if they are willing to abandon the others to you; if they are, 'tis well; but this one must be saved... Oh! I can do it; for all this night, I have restrained

myself; all this night, I have kept on my mask; so he has not seen me, Orsini, this noble youth: my face has remained veiled for him; if he saw me to-morrow, he could not recognise me. Well then, I save his life; I wish it to be so. I send him away safe and sound; let him be taken back to the town; let him live to remember this night, so that it may burn the rest of his life with souvenirs of love, that it may be one of those heavenly dreams that one has once on this earth, that it may be for him, in short, what it will be for me.

Ors. It shall be as you wish, madam.

Marg. Yes, yes, save him; that is what I had to tell you, what I hesitated to tell you. Now that I have told you, let the door be opened, let the daggers return to their sheaths; make haste, make haste!
[*Exit Orsini.*]

SCENE IV

MARGUERITE, then PHILIPPE.

Phil. [*Behind the scenes.*] Why, where are you, my life?... where are you, my love?... Your name, woman's or angel's? let me call you by your name!...
[*He enters.*]

Marg. Young man, behold the daylight.

Phil. What matters day to me? what matters night to me? There is neither day nor night... There are candles burning, wines sparkling, hearts beating, and time flying... Come back.

Marg. No, no; we must separate.

Phil. Separate?... Ah! who knows if I shall ever find you again? It is not time to separate yet.

I am yours as you are mine: to separate the links of that chain, is to break it.

Marg. Ah! you promised more moderation... Time flies, my husband may awake, seek me; come here... Behold the daylight.

Phil. No, no, it is not daylight; it is the moon peeping between two clouds chased by the wind. Your old husband could not have come so soon... Old age is confiding and drowsy. One hour yet, my beautiful mistress; one hour, and then adieu...

Marg. No, no, not an hour, not an instant; go! I beg of you... Go without looking behind, without remembering this night of love, without speaking of it to anyone, without saying a word of it to your best friend... Go, quit Paris, I tell you; quit it; I command you, go!

Phil. Well then, I go...but your name?... Tell me your name, that it may sound eternally in my ear, that it may be graven for ever on my heart... Your name! that I may repeat it in my dreams. I guess that you are beautiful, that you are noble! Your colours! that I may wear them. I have found you because you wished it; but I have been seeking you long. Your name in a last kiss! and I go.

Marg. I have no name for you! This night passed, all is over between you and me; I am free and I set you free. For the hours passed together we are quits. I owe nothing to you and you owe nothing to me... Obey me then if you love me... Obey me even if you do not love me, for I am a woman, I am in my own house, I command. Our night's party is broken up, I know you no longer... Go!

Phil. Ah! that's how it is!... I entreat and I am laughed at; I implore and I am dismissed... Very well, I go! Adieu, noble and chaste lady, who appoint nocturnal meetings, for whom the shades of night are not enough and who need a mask; but I am not the man to be made a plaything of for an hour's passion; it shall not be said that when I had gone you laughed at the dupe you had made.

Marg. What do you mean?

Phil. [*Snatching a pin from Marguerite's head-dress.*] Do not be afraid, madam, it will be less than nothing...merely a mark by which I may be able to recognise you. [*He marks her face, through her mask.*] That is all.

Marg. Ah!

Phil. [*Laughing.*] Now, tell me your name or not; remove your mask or let it remain, it matters little to me! I shall recognise you anywhere.

Marg. You have hurt me, sir!... That mark is as good as if you had seen my face... Madman whom I wished to save and who wish to die! That mark, I tell you, that mark... Pray to God!... Let my first orders only be remembered.

[*Exit Marguerite. Orsini, who has entered at Marguerite's last sentence, goes to the window, closes it and takes away the light. Total darkness until the end of the act.*

SCENE V

PHILIPPE, BURIDAN.

Buridan emerges slowly from the door to the left, stretches out his arms, steals along in the darkness and puts his hand on Philippe's arm.

Bur. Who is there?

Phil. I.

Bur. Who are you?

Phil. What is that to you?

Bur. I know your voice.

[He draws him towards the window.]

Phil. Buridan!

Bur. Philippe!

Phil. You here?

Bur. Yes, sang-Dieu! I am here; I would I had met you somewhere else.

Phil. Why so.

Bur. Then you do not know where we are?

Phil. Where are we?

Bur. You do not know who these women are?

Phil. You are quite excited, Buridan.

Bur. These women... Have you no suspicion of their rank?

Phil. No.

Bur. Have you not observed that they must be great ladies? Have you seen—for I believe that there has just happened to you what has just happened to myself—have you seen in your garrison love-affairs many hands so white, many smiles so cold? have you remarked those rich dresses, those soft voices, those deceitful glances? They are great ladies, I tell you! They have had us sought for at night by an old veiled woman with honeyed words. Oh, they are great ladies! We had hardly entered that dazzling room, perfumed and heated to turn one's head, when they received us with a thousand caresses, surrendered themselves to us without ceremony, without delay! to us, on the spot, to us, strangers and all soaked with the thunderstorm.

You see plainly that they are great ladies. At table—and it is what happened to both of us, is it not?—at table they gave themselves over to every transport and self-abandonment that love and passion could inspire; they blasphemed; they indulged in strange conversations and odious words, they forgot all reserve, all modesty; forgot earth, forgot Heaven. They are great ladies, very great ladies, I tell you again!

Phil. What of that?

Bur. Well, does that not frighten you?

Phil. Frighten me! What frighten me?

Bur. This care they take to remain unknown.

Phil. Let me see my lady to-morrow and I will recognise her.

Bur. Did she unmask, then?

Phil. No; but with this gold pin, through her mask, I made a mark on her face which she will carry for many a day.

Bur. Unfortunate youth! There was perhaps some hope left that we might escape and you kill us!

Phil. How?

Bur. [*Leading him to the window.*] Look before you.

Phil. The Louvre.

Bur. At your feet.

Phil. The Seine.

Bur. And round us, the Tower of Nesle.

Phil. The Tower of Nesle!

Bur. Yes, yes, the old Tower of Nesle, below which so many dead bodies are found.

Phil. And we are unarmed! for you were asked for your sword as you came in, as I was asked for mine?

Bur. Of what use would they be to us? It is not a question of defending ourselves; we must fly. Try that door.

Phil. [*Shaking the door on the left.*] Locked... Ah! listen... If I die and if you live, you will avenge me.

Bur. Yes, and if I die and you live, the vengeance will be yours; you will go to your brother Gaultier, your all-powerful brother; you will tell him... Listen; you must write, proofs are necessary.

Phil. Neither pen, nor ink, nor parchment.

Bur. Here are tablets; you have still the pin: in your arm there are veins and in those veins blood; write, so that your brother may believe me, if I go to ask him for vengeance for you; write, write: 'I have been assassinated by...' I will fill in the name, for I will know who, yes, I will know who!... And sign... If you escape, do for me, what I would have done for you. Adieu... Let us each try to escape in our own direction... Adieu.

Phil. Adieu, brother; in life...in death!

[*They embrace; Philippe re-enters the room he had left. Buridan makes to withdraw in his turn; he retreats before Landry who is just coming in.*]

SCENE VI

BURIDAN, LANDRY, then PHILIPPE and MARGUERITE.

Bur. Ah!

Land. Say your prayers, sir knight.

Bur. That voice is one I know

Land. Captain!

Bur. Landry! you must save me, my lad; they want to assassinate us... [*A cry is heard.*] A cry!...whose is that cry?

Land. It is that of your third companion, who is with the third sister...they are murdering him.

Bur. You will not kill me, will you?

Land. I cannot save you; I would like to, nevertheless.

Bur. That staircase?...

Land. It is guarded.

Bur. That window?...

Land. Can you swim?

Bur. Yes.

Land. [*Opening the window.*] Then, make haste. God preserve you!

Bur. [*On the balcony.*] Lord, Lord, have pity on me! [*He throws himself over: the noise of a heavy body falling into the water is heard.*]

Ors. [*Entering.*] Where is he?

Land. In the river... It is done.

Ors. He was quite dead?

Land. Quite dead.

Phil. [*Entering backwards and all bloody.*] Help! help, brother! help, brother! [*He falls.*]

Marg. [*Entering, a torch in her hand.*] 'See your face and then die,' you said? Let it be then as you desire. [*She pulls off her mask.*] Look and die!

Phil. Marguerite of Burgundy! Queen of France! [*He dies.*]

The Watchman outside. It is three of the clock. All is quiet. Parisians, sleep.

ACT II

MARGUERITE OF BURGUNDY

THIRD TABLEAU

Marguerite's apartment, at the Louvre.

SCENE I

MARGUERITE, CHARLOTTE, then GAULTIER.

When the curtain rises, the Queen is lying on a couch. She awakes and calls one of her women.

Marg. Charlotte ! Charlotte ! [*Charlotte enters.*] Is it day, Charlotte ?

Char. Yes, your Majesty, it has been light for some time.

Marg. Draw back the curtains slowly, so that the brightness may not hurt me. That is right. How is the weather ?

Char. [*Going to the window.*] Superb ! Last night's storm has swept even the smallest cloud from the sky ; it is one sheet of azure.

Marg. What is happening in the street ?

Char. A young noble, wrapped in his cloak, is talking in front of your windows to a monk of the order of Saint Francis.

Marg. Do you know him ?

Char. Yes ; it is Messire Gaultier d'Aulnay.

Marg. Ah ! does he not look in this direction ?

Char. From time to time... He leaves the monk, he enters under the arcade of the palace.

Marg. [*Eagerly.*] Charlotte, go and enquire how

my sisters, the Princesses Blanche and Jeanne, are. I shall call you when I wish to know about them. You hear, I shall call you.

Char. [*Going.*] Yes, madam.

Marg. He was there, waiting my rising, and not daring to hasten it, with his eyes fixed on my windows... Gaultier, my gallant gentleman!

Gaul. [*Appearing by a small concealed door at the bed-head.*] Have all the angels of heaven watched at my queen's pillow to give her peaceful sleep and golden dreams? [*He sits down on the cushions of the estrade.*]

Marg. Yes, I have had sweet dreams, Gaultier; I dreamt I saw a young man who resembled you; he had your eyes and your voice; he had your age, your transports of love.

Gaul. And this dream?...

Marg. Let me recall it... I am scarcely awake yet, my ideas are all confused... The dream had a terrible end, a pain as if someone had torn my cheek.

Gaul. [*Seeing the scar.*] Ah! in truth, madam, you are hurt!

Marg. [*Collecting her thoughts.*] Yes, yes... I know; a pin...a gold pin...a pin from my head-dress that rolled into my bed and tore my... [*Aside.*] Oh! I remember...

Gaul. Look!...and why risk your beauty thus, my beloved Marguerite? Your beauty is not yours; it is mine.

Marg. Whom were you talking to in front of my window?

Gaul. To a monk who was handing me tablets from a stranger I saw yesterday, who knew no one

at Paris and who, trembling lest some mischance should befall him in this great city, has made me promise by his intermediary to open them if I was two days without word of him : he is a captain I met yesterday with my brother at Orsini's tavern.

Marg. You will present this brother of yours to me this morning ; I love him already with a part of the love I have for you.

Gaul. Oh my beautiful queen ! keep your love quite whole for me ; for I would be jealous, even of my brother... Yes, he will come this morning to your levee : he is a good and loyal youth, Marguerite ; he is the half of my life, he is my second soul !

Marg. And the first?...

Gaul. The first, is yourself ; or rather, you are everything to me ; soul, life, existence ; I live in you, and I would count the beatings of my own heart by putting my hand on yours... Oh ! if you loved me as I love you, Marguerite ? you would be mine altogether, as I am altogether yours.

Marg. No, my friend, no ; leave me a pure love. If I yielded to you to-day, to-morrow, perhaps, I might fear you... One indiscretion, one word is mortal for us queens : content yourself with loving me, Gaultier, and of knowing that I love to hear you tell me so.

Gaul. Why must the King return to-morrow, then !

Marg. To-morrow !...and, with him, adieu to our liberty ; adieu to our sweet and long interviews... Oh ! let us speak of something else. Is this scar very conspicuous ?

Gaul. Yes.

Marg. What is it I hear in the next room ?

Gaul. [*Rising.*] The noise our young nobles are making, waiting their Queen's levee.

Marg. They must not be kept waiting, they might perhaps suspect for whom I have forgotten them. I shall find you again in their midst, shall I not, my lord, my true lord and master, my king, who would be my only king, if it was love that made royalty?... Au revoir.

Gaul. Already?...

Marg. It must be... Go. [*She pulls a cord, the curtains close. Gaultier is in the room; Marguerite's arm only is passed between the two curtains. Gaultier kisses her hand; she calls.*] Charlotte! Charlotte!

Char. [*Behind the curtains.*] Madam?

Marg. [*Drawing back her hand.*] Let the rooms be thrown open.

SCENE II

*GAULTIER, PIERREFONDS, SAVOISY, RAOUL,
Courtiers, then MARIGNY.*

Sav. Ah! Gaultier has had the start of us, and that is right... How fares this morning the Marguerite of Marguerites, The Queen of France, Navarre and Burgundy?

Gaul. I do not know, gentlemen: I have just arrived. I hoped to see my brother among you... Greeting, gentlemen, greeting! What news this morning?

Pierre. Nothing very new... The King arrives to-morrow; he will have a splendid entry into his

good city. Messire de Marigny has given orders that the good people shall be joyful and cry "Noël" along his route: meanwhile, they are crying "Malediction" on the banks of the Seine.

Gaul. And why?

Sav. The river has just thrown another drowned man upon its bank and the people are growing tired of this strange fishing.

Pierre. It means so many anathemas upon this damned Marigny, who is charged with the safety of the city... I' faith, the dead will be welcome if we can suffocate the prime minister under a heap of corpses.

Gaul. [*Going back towards the Courtiers.*] Strange things are happening... Has none of you seen my brother, gentlemen?

Pierre. The truth is, my lords, that if the King does not take care, he will lose by water the third of the noblest and richest of his population. Why, what devilish whim is it that drives our gentles to such an end, good at the best for kittens and young bumpkins?

Sav. Oh! my lords, would you think of believing that those who issue dead from the Seine, enter it alive of their own will? Not so.

Pierre. Unless they are led into it by demons and will-of-the-wisps, I do not quite see...

Sav. The river is indiscreet and does not keep the secrets that are confided to it. A grave is sooner hollowed out in water than in earth; only, the water rejects, and the earth keeps. From the Hotel Saint-Paul to the Louvre, there are many houses that bathe their feet in the water and many windows to these houses...

Raoul. Seigneur de Savoisy is right, and as far as the Tower of Nesle is concerned...

Sav. Yes, I passed at two o'clock in the morning beneath the Louvre, and the Tower of Nesle was ablaze; torches ran across its windows; it was a night of festivity at the tower. I do not love that great mass of stone that seems, at night, an evil genius watching over the city, that great immovable mass, throwing out fire at intervals from all its apertures, like a vent-hole of hell, silent under the black sky, with the river bubbling at its foot. If you knew what the people tell...

Gaul. Gentlemen, you forget that is is a royal residence.

Sav. Besides, the King arrives to-morrow, and the King, as you know, gentlemen, does not love news of which he is not the subject.—Is it not so, Monsieur de Marigny?

Mar. [*Entering.*] First tell me what you were saying, gentlemen? so that I can answer your question.

Sav. We were saying that the people of Paris were a very fortunate people, to have King Louis X. for king, and M. de Marigny for prime minister.

Mar. And they would not enjoy the half at least, of this good-fortune very long, if it depended on you, Monsieur de Savoisy.

A Page. [*Announcing.*] The Queen, my lords.

SCENE III

The Same, MARGUERITE, Pages, Guards, then a Gipsy.

Marg. God save you, gentlemen! You know that the King my lord and master arrives to-

morrow ; therefore, if you have any favour to ask of the Regent, make haste, for I have only one day more of power.

Sav. We shall not lose you, madam ; you will always be our Queen, queen by blood, queen by beauty ; and you will always be the real Regent of France, so long as our King, whom God preserve ! possesses eyes and a heart.

Marg. You flatter me, Count.—Good day, Seigneur Gaultier ; you were to bring me your brother ?

Gaul. And you see me very anxious about him, madam. Oh ! that accursed town of Paris ! it is full of gipsies and sorcerers... Do not shrug your shoulders, Monsieur de Marigny, I do not blame you ; the town, growing larger every day as it does, escapes your surveillance. This morning again, a body has been found on the shore, a little below the Tower of Nesle.

Mar. Two, sir.

Marg. [*Aside.*] Two !

Gaul. And whom would you have commit these murders, if not gipsies and sorcerers who have need of blood for their incantations ? Do you believe that nature is forced to reveal her secrets without horrible profanations ?

Marg. You forget, Mèssire Gaultier, that M. de Marigny does not believe in necromancy.

Sav. [*At the window.*] He does not believe in it ? Why, madam, one has only to cast one's eyes on the street, one sees nothing but necromancers and sorcerers there ; in the very front of your palace, there is one of them who seems to wait to be consulted, he fixes his eyes with such pertinacity on this window.

Marg. Summon him, Seigneur de Savoisy; I should not be sorry to hear him tell us what will happen to M. de Marigny on the King's return.— Are you agreeable, gentlemen?

Pierre. Our Queen is mistress.

Sav. [*Calling at the window.*] Come up here, gipsy! and have some good news ready: it is a Queen who wishes to know the future.

Marg. Come, gentlemen, we must receive this learned necromancer in a worthy manner.

Sav. Yes, certainly; but, as his knowledge may come to him from God or Satan alike, let us at all events cross ourselves. [*They all make the sign of the cross, with the exception of Marigny.*] Here he is; pardieu! he has passed through the walls! [*Going to him.*] Accursed gipsy, the Queen has made you come in order that you may tell the prime minister...

The Gipsy. [*Entering by the door on the right.*] Let me go to him, then, if you wish me to speak to him. Enguerrand de Marigny, behold me.

Mar. Hearken, sorcerer; if you would be welcome here, foretell rather a thousand disgraces for me than one disgrace, a thousand deaths than one death; and I may add also that the more confident and joyous your predictions will find the others, the more calm and incredulous will you find me.

The Gipsy. Enguerrand, I have only one disgrace and one death to announce to you, but an early disgrace and a terrible death. If you have any account to settle with God, use dispatch, for, by my mouth, he only gives you three days.

Mar. Thanks, gipsy; for none of us even knows if he has three hours; others await you... Thanks.

The Gipsy. What would you have me say to *you*, Gaultier d'Aulnay? At your age, the past is yesterday, the future to-morrow.

Gaul. Speak to me of the present, then.

The Gipsy. Child, ask me rather about the past; ask me rather about the future; but the present, no, no!

Gaul. Sorcerer, I wish to know it. What is happening just now within me?

The Gipsy. You await your brother, and your brother does not come.

Gaul. And my brother, where is he?

The Gipsy. The people crowd together on the bank of the Seine.

Gaul. My brother!

The Gipsy. They surround two bodies, crying "Woe!"

Gaul. My brother!

The Gipsy. Go down and run to the shore.

Gaul. My brother!

The Gipsy. And there, look at the left arm of one of the drowned and one voice more will cry "Woe, woe!"

Gaul. [*Rushing headlong out of the room.*] My brother! my brother!

The Gipsy. [*Turning towards the Queen.*] And you, Marguerite of Burgundy, do you not wish to know anything? or do you believe I have nothing to tell you? do you think a royal destiny is super-human and mortal eyes cannot read there?

Marg. I wish to know nothing, nothing.

The Gipsy. And yet you have made me come; I am here, Marguerite; now you must hear me.

Marg. [*Alone, on her throne.*] Do not go away, Monseieur de Marigny.

The Gipsy. O Marguerite! Marguerite! you who require nights very gloomy without, very well-lit within?

Marg. Who summoned this gipsy? who summoned him? what does he want of me?

The Gipsy. [*Putting his foot on the first step of the throne.*] Marguerite, is there not a body missing in your account? did you not expect to hear three said instead of two this morning?

Marg. [*Rising.*] Be silent, or tell me who gives you this power to divine?

The Gipsy. [*Pointing to the gold needle in her head-dress.*] There is my talisman, Marguerite. Ah! you lift your hand to your cheek! 'Tis well, all is told. [*Aside.*] It is she. [*Aloud.*] I must tell you a last word that none may hear. Back, Seigneur de Marigny.

Mar. I take no orders, gipsy, save from the Queen.

Marg. [*Descending from the throne.*] Stand back, stand back.

The Gipsy. You see that I know everything, Marguerite; that your love, your honour, your life are in my hands. Marguerite, this night I shall await you after the curfew at Orsini's tavern. I must speak to you alone.

Marg. Can a Queen of France go out alone at that hour?

The Gipsy. It no farther from here to the Porte Saint-Honoré than to the Tower of Nesle.

Marg. I will go, I will go.

The Gipsy. You will bring a parchment and the seal of the state.

Marg. So be it; but, till then?...

The Gipsy. Till then, you will retire to your room, which will be closed to everybody.

Marg. To everybody?

The Gipsy. Even to Gaultier d'Aulnay, above all to Gaultier d'Aulnay.—My Lords, the Queen thanks you and prays God to have you in his keeping.—Forbid admission to your apartments, madam.

Marg. Guards, let no one enter.

The Gipsy. Till to-night at Orsini's, Marguerite.

Marg. [*Withdrawing.*] Till to-night. [*The gipsy passes through the midst of the nobles, who stand back and watch him with terror.*]

Sav. My Lords, can you conceive anything equal to this? is this man not Satan?

Pierre. What can he have said to the Queen?

Sav. Monsieur de Marigny, you who were close to Marguerite, did you hear anything of his prediction?

Mar. It is possible, gentlemen; but I only remember the one he made to me.

Sav. Will you believe in sorcerers in the future, then?

Mar. Why more than before? He has foretold me my disgrace; I am still minister; he has foretold me my death... God's truth, gentlemen, if any of you is tempted to satisfy himself that I am quite alive, he has only to say so: I have at my side a sword which will undertake the task, in such a case, of replying for its master.

Gaul. [*Rushing into the room.*] Justice, justice!

All. Gaultier!

Gaul. It was my brother, my lords, my brother Philippe, my only friend, my only kinsman! My

brother murdered! drowned! my brother lying on the shore! malediction! I must have justice, I must have his assassin, that I may slay him, that I may trample on him! His assassin, Savoisy, do you know him?

Sav. Why, you are mad.

Gaul. No, I am accursed... My rank, my blood, my gold to him who will name him. Take care, Monsieur de Marigny, it is you who are responsible for him to me; you are the guardian of the town of Paris; not a drop of blood is spilled there, that does not stain you. Where is the Queen? I wish to see the Queen, I wish to see Marguerite; Marguerite will give me justice. My brother! my brother! [*He rushes towards the door at the back.*]

Sav. Gaultier, my friend...

Gaul. I have no friend; I had only a brother, I must have my brother alive or his assassin dead! Marguerite! Marguerite! [*He shakes the door.*] It is I, it is I, open!

A Captain. You cannot pass.

Gaul. I will! I will! let me go... Marguerite, my brother! [*The guards seize him round the body and remove him; he draws his sword.*] I must see her, I wish it. [*He is disarmed by the guards.*] Oh! oh! malediction! [*He falls down and rolls on the ground.*] Oh! my brother, my brother!...

FOURTH TABLEAU

Orsini's tavern (Scenery of Act I.).

SCENE I

ORSINI, then MARGUERITE.

Ors. So then, it appears that there will be nothing to do to-night at the Tower of Nesle; so much the better! for this blood that has been spilled must needs recoil one day on someone's head, and woe to him who is chosen of God for that expiation! [*A knock. He rises.*] Had I spoken too soon? [*Another knock.*] Who is there?

Marg. [*Without.*] Open, it is I.

Ors. The Queen!... [*He opens.*] Alone at this hour?

Marg. [*Seating herself.*] Yes, alone and at this hour; it is strange, is it not? What is happening to me is strange too. Listen, did no one knock?

Ors. No.

Marg. You must give me this room for half-an-hour.

Ors. The house and its master are yours, dispose of them. [*A knock.*]

Marg. [*Rising.*] Some one knocked, that time.

Ors. Do you wish me to open?

Marg. That is my task; leave me alone.

Ors. If the Queen has need of me, her servant will be there.

Marg. 'Tis well. Only let the servant remember that he must hear nothing.

Ors. He will be deaf, as he will be dumb.

[*Exit.—A fresh knock.*]

Marg. Is it you?

Bur. It is I.

SCENE II

MARGUERITE, BURIDAN.

Marg. [*Opening and starting back.*] It is not the gipsy!

Bur. No, it is the captain; but if the captain is the gipsy, that will come to the same thing, will it not? I preferred this costume; it would defend better, at need, the master who wears it than the robe the master wore this morning; again, at the present time and at this hour of the night, the streets are dangerous. In short, wrongly or rightly, it is a precaution that I thought I ought to take.

Marg. I have come, you see.

Bur. And you have done well, Queen.

Marg. You will recognise that on my side, at least, it is an act of complacency.

Bur. Whether you came here from complacency or from fear, I was certain of finding you: that was the essential point for me.

Marg. You are not a gipsy, then?

Bur. No, by God's grace; I am a Christian, or rather, I was; but I have had no faith for a long time now, having no longer any hope... Let us speak of something else. [*He takes a chair.*]

Marg. [*Seating herself.*] I am accustomed to be addressed standing and uncovered.

Bur. I shall address you standing and uncovered, Marguerite, because you are a woman and not because you are a queen. Look around you. Is there a single object by which you can recognise

the rank to which you boast of belonging, foolish woman? Do these black and sooty walls resemble the hangings of a queen's apartment? are that smoky lamp and that rickety table the furniture of a queen? Queen, where are your guards? queen, where is your throne? Here are only a man and a woman; and as the man is calm and the woman trembles, it is the man who is king.

Marg. Who are you to speak to me thus? whence comes it that you think me in your power, and what makes you imagine that I tremble?

Bur. Who am I? I am at present Captain Buridan... Perhaps I have another name besides that would be better known to you; but for the moment it is needless that you should know it... Whence comes it that I think you in my power?... It is because, if you had not yourself thought you were, you would not thus have come... What makes me imagine that you tremble? The fact that one body is missing in your account as in mine; that the Seine has only cast up and could only cast up two last night.

Marg. And the third?

Bur. The third?... The third exists, Marguerite; the third is Captain Buridan, the man before you.

Marg. [*Rising.*] It is impossible!

Bur. Impossible?... Listen, Marguerite; do you wish me to tell you what passed last night at the Tower of Nesle?

Marg. Do.

Bur. There were three women; their names were: Princess Jeanne, Princess Blanche, and Queen Marguerite. There were three men, and

their names were: Hector de Chevreuse, Captain Buridan, and Philippe d'Aulnay.

Marg. Philippe d'Aulnay?

Bur. Yes, Philippe d'Aulnay, the brother of Gaultier; it was he who wished you to remove your mask; it was he who gave you that scar on your face.

Marg. Then Hector and Philippe are dead, are they not, and you alone remain alive?

Bur. Alone.

Marg. And this is what you said to yourself: "I will reveal what has happened and I will ruin the Queen; the Queen loves Gaultier d'Aulnay, and I will say to Gaultier d'Aulnay: 'The Queen killed your brother...'" You are mad, Buridan, for you will not be believed... You are very audacious, for, now that I know your secret as you know mine, I could call, make a sign, and in five minutes, Captain Buridan would have rejoined Hector de Chevreuse and Philippe d'Aulnay.

Bur. Do so, and to-morrow, Gaultier d'Aulnay will open, at ten o'clock in the morning, tablets, which a monk of Saint Francis handed to him to-day, and which he swore, on the cross and on his honour, to open, if, from now till then, he had not again seen a certain captain whom he met at Orsini's tavern... I was that captain; if you cause me to be slain, Marguerite, he will not see me and he will open the tablets.

Marg. Do you imagine that he will believe your handwriting more than your words?

Bur. No, Marguerite, no; but he will believe his brother's writing, the last words of his brother, written in his brother's blood, signed with

his brother's hand ; he will believe in these words which he will read : *I die assassinated by Marguerite of Burgundy*. You quitted Philippe for an instant only, imprudent one that you are ! it was enough. Now, will he believe the betrayed lover ? will he believe his murdered brother ? Marguerite, answer me, do you think, now, that you have only to cause Captain Buridan to be killed to get rid of him?... Search my heart with twenty daggers, and you will not find my secret there. Send me to rejoin my companions of last night, Hector and Philippe, in the Seine and my secret will float on the Seine, and to-morrow, to-morrow, at ten o'clock...Gaultier...Gaultier, my avenger, will come to call you to account for his brother's blood and for mine... Come now... Am I mad, imprudent, or were my measures well taken ?

Marg. If that is so...

Bur. It is so.

Marg. What do you want of me then ? Do you wish money ? You will search with open hands in the State treasury. Is the death of an enemy necessary to you ? Here are the seal and the parchment you told me to bring. Are you ambitious?... I can make you what you desire to be in the State... Speak, what do you wish ?...

Bur. I wish all these things. [*They sit down.*] Listen, Marguerite ; as I have said, there is neither king nor queen here... There are a man and a woman who are about to make an agreement, and woe to that one of the two who breaks it before being assured of the death of the other !... Marguerite, I want gold enough to pave a palace.

Marg. You shall have it, should I have to melt the sceptre and the crown !

Bur. I wish to be prime minister.

Marg. It is Sire Enguerrand de Marigny who holds that position.

Bur. I wish his title and his position.

Marg. But you can only have them by his death.

Bur. I wish his title and his position.

Marg. You shall have them.

Bur. And I will leave you your lover and keep your secret. 'Tis well. [*He rises.*] We two now, we two will possess the kingdom of France; we two will move the State with a sign; we two will be the king and the real king; and I will keep silence, Marguerite; and you shall have every evening, your boat moored to the bank, and I will cause the windows of the Louvre that look upon the Tower of Nesle to be walled up. Do you accept, Marguerite?

Marg. I accept.

Bur. You understand, Marguerite; to-morrow at this hour, I wish to be prime minister?

Marg. You shall be.

Bur. And to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock, I will go to the Court to get my tablets.

Marg. [*Rising.*] You will be well received there.

Bur. [*Taking a parchment and handing her the pen.*] The order to arrest Marigny.

Marg. [*Signing.*] Here it is.

Bur. 'Tis well. Adieu, Marguerite, until to-morrow. [*He takes his cloak and exit.*]

SCENE III

MARGUERITE, alone and following him with her eyes.

Until to-morrow, demon! Oh, if I have you in my hands one day as you have had me to-night in yours...if these accursed tablets... Woe, woe to you who come to brave me thus, me, daughter of a duke, me, wife of a king, me, regent of France!... Oh, those tablets!...the half of my blood to him who gives them to me... If I could see Gaultier before ten o'clock to-morrow, if I could recover those tablets from him!... Gaultier, who will speak of nothing but his brother, who will ask justice for the murder of his brother; but he loves me more than anything in the world, and if he fears to lose me, he will forget everything, even his brother... I must see him to-night... Where to find him? I tremble at confiding in that Italian again; he knows so many of my secrets already! It seems to me I saw that door move... Buridan did not close it... It opens... A man!... Orsini! help, Orsini!

SCENE IV

MARGUERITE, GAULTIER.

Gaul. Marguerite! It is you, Marguerite!

Marg. Gaultier! [*Aside.*] It is my good genius that sends him to me.

Gaul. I have sought you all day to demand justice of you, Marguerite... I came to Orsini's that he might help me to see you, for I must have justice... You are here, my queen... Justice! justice!

Marg. And I came to Orsini's, intending to send him in search of you; for, before parting from you, I wished to bid you adieu.

Gaul. Adieu, do you say?... Your pardon, I do not quite comprehend...for one sole idea pursues me, possesses me...I see continually on that bare shore the body of my brother, drowned, defiled, pierced with wounds... I must have his murderer, Marguerite.

Marg. Yes; I have given orders... Your brother shall be avenged, Gaultier...his murderer, we will find him, I give you my word... But the king arrives to-morrow, we must part.

Gaul. Part?...what are you saying?... My thoughts are like a night of tempest, and what you have just said like a flash of lightning which allows me to read them for a moment... Yes, we shall part...yes, when my brother is avenged.

Marg. We shall part to-morrow... The king returns to-morrow. Oh! why, in my Gaultier's heart, in that heart which belonged wholly to his Marguerite, has another feeling come to take the place of love? Yesterday, it was all mine still, that heart. [*She places her hand on Gaultier's breast; aside.*] The tablets are there!

Gaul. Yes, it belongs wholly to vengeance; then, afterwards, wholly to you.

Marg. What have you there?

Gaul. Tablets.

Marg. Yes, tablets that a monk gave you this morning; you are the happy depository of the thoughts of one of the women of my Court.

Gaul. O Marguerite! Do you jest with me? No: these tablets come to me from a captain w.

I have only seen once, whose very name I do not know, who sent them to me I know not why, and who was here yesterday with my brother, my poor brother...

Marg. Do you think I will believe that, Gaultier? But what matters it! does jealousy become those who are about to part for ever? Adieu, Gaultier, adieu!

Gaul. What are you doing, Marguerite? Do you wish to drive me mad? I come to you in despair to ask you again for my brother, and you speak to me of parting! A first misfortune staggers me and you overwhelm me with a second! Why leave me? Why bid me adieu?

Marg. The King has suspicions, Gaultier; he must not find you here. Besides, you will take these tablets with you to console you.

Gaul. Then you really believe they are a woman's.

Marg. I am sure of it. You would have reassured me long ere this by showing them to me.

Gaul. But can I? Are they mine? I have sworn on my honour not to open them till to-morrow, or to return them to him to whom they belong, if he claims them. Can I make any clearer to you a thing I do not myself understand? I have sworn on my honour that they would not leave my hands. That is the whole: I have sworn.

Marg. And had I sworn nothing on my honour, then? Have I violated no vow for your sake? Forget that I have been a perjurer on your account, for there is perjury in love still more than in adultery; forget and keep your word, I will keep my jealousy. Adieu!

Gaul. Marguerite, in the name of Heaven...

Marg. Honour! The honour of a man!... And is the honour of a woman nothing, then? You have sworn? Why, a word, a thought of yours, has made me forget a vow made to God, and I would forget it again, and, if you asked me, I would forget the whole world for your sake!

Gaul. And yet you wish me to leave you! You wish us to part!

Marg. Yes, I do. I have promised this separation to the holy tribunal. Yet if you demanded it, if I was quite certain that these tablets were not a woman's, then I would brave the anathema of God as I have braved that of men; for you must remember that at Court the purity of our love is doubted! They believe me guilty, do they not? just as if I was; still, in spite of the necessity for your departure, if you entreated me, as I entreat you, I would say to you, 'Stay, my Gaultier, stay! let my reputation perish, let my power perish! but stay, stay beside me, near me always!'

Gaul. You would do this?

Marg. Yes; but I am a woman; one, whose honour is nothing, who can perjure herself with impunity, whom you can torture at leisure, so long as you do not break your word as a gentleman; whom you can kill with jealousy, as long as you keep your oath.

Gaul. But if it was ever known...

Marg. Who will know? have we witnesses here?

Gaul. You will return them to me before ten o'clock?

Marg. I will return them to you this very instant.

Gaul. God, pardon me! Is it an angel or a

demon that makes me thus forget my brother, my promises, my honour?

Marg. [*Taking the tablets out of his hands.*] I have them. [*She hastily approaches the lamp, examines the tablets, and tears out one of the leaves.*]

Gaul. Marguerite! Marguerite!... O human frailty!... O pardon me, brother! did I come to speak of love? did I come to reassure the frivolous fears of a woman? I had come to avenge you; pardon me, brother!

Marg. [*Returning to him.*] Oh! I was mad! No, no! there was nothing in these tablets; it was not a woman that gave them to you! My Gaultier does not lie when he says he loves me, that he loves no one but me. I, too, love none but him; I, too, will keep my promise and we will not be separated; little care I for the King's suspicions; I will be so glad to suffer for my knight.

Gaul. Let us think of my brother, Marguerite.

Marg. Well, my friend, enquiries have already been made, and they suspect...

Gaul. Whom do they suspect?

Marg. A strange captain who has only been here for a few days, who is to come to-morrow to Court for the first time.

Gaul. His name?

Marg. Buridan, I believe.

Gaul. Buridan! and you have given orders for his arrest, have you not?

Marg. It was only this evening I knew of it, and the captain of my guards was not at hand.

Gaul. The order! the order! So that I may arrest this man myself! Oh, no other shall arrest the murderer of my brother! The order, Mar-

guerite ! the order, in the name of Heaven !

Marg. You will arrest him yourself ?

Gaul. Yes. Should he be praying before the altar, I will tear him from the altar ; yes, I will arrest him wherever he is.

Marg. [*Goes to the table and signs a parchment.*] Here is the order.

Gaul. Thanks, thanks, my queen.

Marg. [*Aside, in a threatening tone.*] Oh ! Buridan, it is I now who have your life in my hands !

ACT III

ENGUERRAND DE MARIGNY

FIFTH TABLEAU

In front of the old Louvre. The slope descending to the river. On the left, the face of the palace, with a real balcony and a postern.—When the curtain rises, Richard is watching the river flowing ; other plebeians talk as they watch the Louvre.

SCENE I

RICHARD, SIMON, passing ; Plebeians.

Sim. Hallo ! it is you, Master Richard ? why, have you turned fisherman instead of cobbler ?

Rich. No ; but you know all the nobility of the kingdom are going to the devil ; and, as it seems that the road is shorter by water than by land, they are going by water.

Sim. And what are you doing there with your nose to the river and your back to the Louvre?

Rich. I am watching the foot of the old Tower of Nesle to see if there is any pilgrim passing, that I may wish him a prosperous journey.

A Cross-bow-man. [*On guard at the postern gate.*] Hallo, there, clowns, go and talk farther away.

Rich. Thanks, master sentinel. [*Going away.*] The devil twist your neck in your sentry-box!

SCENE II

The same, SAVOISTY, followed by a Page; RAOUL, then PIERREFONDS.

Sav. [*Finding himself face to face with Richard.*] Take the gutter, rascal!

Rich. [*Making way.*] Yes, my lord. [*Going away.*] You will take the Seine, yourself, some day.

Sav. You spoke, I believe?

Rich. I was praying that God might preserve you.

Sav. 'Tis well.

The Page. The door of the Louvre is closed, my lord.

Sav. That cannot be, Olivier; it is nine o'clock.

Page. It is true, nevertheless; see for yourself.

Sav. This is very strange. [*To another nobleman who arrives with his page.*] Do you understand, Sire Raoul, what has happened?

Raoul. What has happened?

Sav. The Louvre closed at this hour!

Raoul. Let us wait for a moment ; they are sure to open it.

Sav. The weather is beautiful, let us walk up and down while we wait.

Raoul. Cross-bow-man !

The Cross-bow-man. My lord ?

Raoul. Do you know why the door is not open ?

The Cross-bow-man. No, my lord.

Pierre. [*Arriving.*] Good morrow, gentlemen. Apparently the Queen is holding her Court under her balcony this morning.

Sav. You have guessed at the first attempt, Sire de Pierrefonds.

SCENE III

The Same, BURIDAN, followed by five Guards.

Bur. [*Posting his guards in the background.*] Remain there.

Sav. Since you are so excellent a sorcerer, can you tell me who this newcomer is ; and if he is a marquis or a duke, to have a guard of five men ?

Pierre. I do not know him ; doubtless he is some Italian seeking his fortune.

Sav. And bringing behind him something to take it with.

Bur. [*Stopping and facing them.*] And at his side something to keep it with, once he has taken it, gentlemen.

Sav. Then will you give me your secret, sir ?

Bur. I hope I will only require one lesson to teach you it.

Sav. It seems to me I have heard that voice before.

Raoul and Pierre. And to me, too.

Sav. Ah! here is our worthy minister, Sire Enguerrand de Marigny, coming to mount guard along with us.

Bur. [*To his guards.*] Attention!

SCENE IV

The Same, MARIGNY.

Mar. [*Trying to enter.*] How does it happen that we cannot get into the Palace?

Bur. I am about to inform you, my lord; it is because there was an arrest to be made this morning, and the interior of the Palace is a place of refuge.

Mar. An arrest, without my knowing anything of it?

Bur. I was just waiting for you, my lord, to inform you of it: read.

Sav. [*To the other nobles, who look on in astonishment.*] It seems to me that matters are becoming complicated.

Mar. Give it to me.

Bur. Read it aloud.

Mar. "Order of Marguerite of Burgundy, Queen Regent of France, to Captain Buridan, to arrest and seize the body of Sire Enguerrand de Marigny, wherever he may find him."

Bur. I am Captain Buridan.

Mar. And you arrest me by order of the Queen?

Bur. Your sword!

Mar. Here it is; draw it from its sheath, sir; it is pure and untarnished, is it not? And now, let the headsman draw my soul from my body, it will be like this sword...

SCENE V

*The Same, MARGUERITE and GAULTIER,
on the Balcony.*

Gaul. Is he among these young nobles, Marguerite?

Marg. That is he speaking to Marigny, with his sword bare.

Gaul. Good. *[They both disappear.]*

Mar. I am ready, let us go.

Bur. *[To the guards.]* Conduct Sire Enguerrand de Marigny to the Castle of Vincennes.

Mar. And from there?

Bur. To Montfaucon, probably, my lord: you have been at some pains to erect the gibbet, it is right that you should test it. Therefore do not complain.

Mar. Captain, I caused it to be erected for criminals and not for martyrs. The will of God be done!

Sav. I warrant you, if he escape this, the minister will believe in sorcerers henceforward.

Bur. *[Letting his head sink on his breast.]* This is an honest man.

Pierre. Ah! a miracle! the postern-gate opens, gentlemen.

Sav. To let out, it seems to me, but not to let in.

Gaul. *[Emerging with four guards, lays his hand on the shoulder of Buridan, whose back is turned to him.]* Are you Captain Buridan?

Bur. *[Turning round.]* I am.

Gaul. What! it is you, you who were at Orsini's tavern with my brother, it is you who are Buridan, suspected and accused of his death?

Bur. [*Looking at the balcony.*] Ah! It is I who am accused?

Gaul. In fact, it was you who urged him to that fatal rendezvous... I dissuaded him from it; you led him on. Poor Philippe! it was you, then! Read this order of the Queen's, sir.

Sav. Why, the Queen has passed the night signing orders, surely?

Gaul. Read it aloud.

Bur. "Order of Marguerite of Burgundy, Queen Regent of France, to Captain Gaultier d'Aulnay, to seize the body of Captain Buridan, wherever he may find him." And it is you who have been chosen to arrest me? I see they have wished you to be punctual at the rendezvous you gave the monk; it is ten o'clock, and at ten o'clock, indeed, we were to meet.

Gaul. Your sword!

Bur. Here it is. My tablets!...

Gaul. Your tablets?

Bur. Yes; have you not got them still?

Sav. Good! apparently everybody is being arrested to-day?

Bur. [*Opens the tablets eagerly and looks for something.*] Malediction!... Gaultier! Gaultier! have these tablets been out of your hands?

Gaul. What do you say?

Bur. Have these tablets passed through the Queen's hands?

Gaul. What do you mean?

Bur. For an instant, for a minute, did they not? by force or by stratagem?... have these tablets left your hands for an instant? Confess it, man.

Gaul. I confess it. What then?

Bur. What then? That instant, short as it was, was sufficient to sign a death-sentence; that sentence was mine; and my blood will fall on your head, for it is you who kill me.

Gaul. I?

Bur. Do you see the place where a leaf has been torn out?

Gaul. Yes.

Bur. Well, on that missing leaf, there was, written by your brother, with your brother's blood, signed by your brother's hand...

Gaul. There was...what? Go on, man.

Bur. Oh, you will not believe it now, now that the leaf is torn out; for you are being hoodwinked... you are a fool.

Gaul. There was?... In the name of Heaven, go on! What was there written on the leaf?

Bur. There was...

Marg. [*Appearing on the balcony.*] Guards, conduct that man to the prison of the Grand Châtelet.

[*The guards surround Buridan.*]

Gaul. But what was there?

Bur. There was: "Gaultier d'Aulnay is a man without faith and without honour, who cannot keep for one day what has been entrusted to his honour and his good faith..." That is what was there, disloyal gentleman! that is what was there! [*Turning towards the balcony.*] Well played, Marguerite. The first game is yours, but I shall have my revenge, I hope!... Let us go, gentlemen.

[*Exeunt.*]

Sav. If I understand anything of all this, may Satan exterminate me!

Marg. You forget that the door of the Louvre

is open, gentlemen, and that the Queen awaits you.

Sav. Ah, that is true ; let us pay our addresses to the Queen.

SIXTH TABLEAU

A Vault in the Grand Châtelet.

SCENE I

BURIDAN, alone, bound and lying on the ground.

One of the men who brought me down here pressed my hand ; but what will he be able to do for me,...supposing, indeed, that I am not mistaken?... Get me water a little fresher, bread a little less black and a priest at the hour of my death... I counted the two hundred and twenty steps they came down, the twelve doors they opened... Come, Buridan, come, bethink yourself of setting your conscience in order ; you have a long and troublesome account to square with Satan... Fool ! ten times fool that I was ! I know men, their honour brittle as glass, melting like snow, when the hot breath of a woman breathes upon it...and I hung my life on that thread !... Fool ! a hundred times, a thousand times fool !... How pleased she is at this moment ! how she jests ! how she presses her lover in her arms !...how each of her kisses removes a piece of the remorse from Gaultier's heart ! While I... I roll on the floor of this dungeon... I should have sent the youth away... If ever !... [*Laughing.*] It is possible !...it is a solitary star in a dark sky ; it is a will-of-the-wisp for the traveller who has lost his way. She will not let me die like this ; she

will want to see me, if only to taunt me with my death... O demons!...demons that make the heart of women...oh! I hope you have not forgotten in hers any of the perverse feelings I believe her to have, for it is on one of them I count... But who can the man be who pressed my hand as he brought me down here? Perhaps I am about to learn, the door opens.

SCENE II

BURIDAN, LANDRY.

Land. Captain, where are you?

Bur. Here.

Land. It is I.

Bur. Who are you? I do not see you.

Land. Must one see one's friends to recognise them?

Bur. It is Landry's voice!

Land. You are right.

Bur. Can you save me?

Land. Impossible.

Bur. Then why, in the devil's name, have you come here?

Land. I have been turnkey here since yesterday.

Bur. You are a pluralist, it seems; turnkey at the Châtelet, assassin at the Tower of Nesle!... Marguerite of Burgundy must give you plenty of work in these two posts?

Land. Why, yes, a fair amount.

Bur. And you can do nothing for me here, not even fetch a confessor, whom I would name to you?

Land. No; but I can hear your confession, so as to be able to repeat it word for word to a priest;

and, if there is any penance to do, on the word of a soldier, I will do it for you.

Bur. Idiot! Can you give me something to write with?

Land. Impossible.

Bur. Can you search my pocket and find a purse there full of gold?

Land. Yes, captain.

Bur. Find it then, in this pocket...here.

Land. What next?

Bur. How many livres do you get a year?

Land. Six.

Bur. Count how much there is in the purse while I reflect. [*A moment's pause.*] Have you counted?

Land. Have you reflected?

Bur. Yes; how much is there in it?

Land. Three gold marks.

Bur. One hundred and sixty-five livres of Tours. Listen. You will have to pass twenty-eight years of your life here, in a prison, to earn that sum. Swear to me, on your eternal salvation, to do what I am about to tell you, and the sum is yours: it is all I possess. If I had more, I would give you more.

Land. And you?

Bur. If I am hanged, which is probable, the hangman will bear the expenses of my burial, and I shall not need the money; if I escape, which is possible, you will have four times the sum, and I, a thousand.

Land. What is there to do, captain?

Bur. Something very simple. You can leave the Châtelet, and, once out of it, never return.

Land. I ask nothing better.

Bur. You will go to lodge with Pierre de Bourges, the innkeeper, opposite the Innocents; it was there I lodged. You will ask for the captain's room; they will give you mine.

Land. So far, it does not seem to be difficult.

Bur. Listen; once in the room, you will shut yourself in; you will count the tiles on the floor, beginning at the corner where there is a crucifix. [*Landry crosses himself.*] Pray, listen to me. On the seventh, you will see a cross: you will raise it with your poniard; and, under a layer of sand, you will find a little iron box, of which the key is in that purse; you may open it to satisfy yourself that there are papers in it, not gold. Then, if, to-morrow, when the King re-enters Paris, you have not seen me again safe and sound; if I have not said to you: "Give me back the box and the key," you will deliver them both to Louis X., King of France, and, if I am dead, you will have avenged me. That is all: my soul will be at ease and I will owe it to you.

Land. And I shall run no other risk?

Bur. No other risk.

Land. You may count upon me.

Bur. On your eternal salvation, you promise to do what I have told you?

Land. By the portion I hope to have in Paradise, I swear it.

Bur. Adieu, then, Landry. Be an honest man, if you can.

Land. I will do what I can, captain; but it is very difficult. [*Exit Landry.*]

SCENE III

BURIDAN, alone.

So be it, then ! Let the hangman and the rope come, and revenge sits at the foot of the gibbet... Revenge ! joyous and sublime word when it is pronounced by living lips ; but sonorous and empty when pronounced above a tomb, and however loudly it resounds, it does not awaken the corpse that sleeps in the grave.

SCENE IV

BURIDAN, MARGUERITE, ORSINI.

Marg. [*Entering by a secret door, holding a lamp in her hand ; to Orsini.*] Is he bound so that I can approach him without fear ?

Ors. Yes, madam.

Marg. Then wait for me there, Orsini ; and at the slightest cry come to my assistance.

[*Exit Orsini.*]

SCENE V

BURIDAN, MARGUERITE.

Bur. A light ! some one comes !

Marg. [*Approaching.*] Yes, some one ! Did you not expect to see some one again before you died ?

Bur. [*Laughing.*] I hoped to ; but I did not count upon it. Ah ! Marguerite, you said to yourself : " He will not die without my enjoying my triumph, without knowing that it is indeed I who kill him. Woman of all pleasures as I am, give me

that pleasure!" Ah! Marguerite, yes, yes, I counted upon your coming, you are right.

Marg. But without hope, did you not? You know me well enough to know that, after having reduced me to fear, brought me to entreaties, neither fear nor entreaties can soften my heart. Oh! your measures were well taken, Buridan; only, you had forgotten that when love, ungovernable love enters a man's heart, it eats away all other feelings there, it lives there at the expense of his honour, of his good faith, of his pledged word; and you confided to the word, the good faith, the honour of a man in love, in love with me, the proof, the only proof you had against me! See, there it is, the precious leaf from your tablets, there it is! *I die assassinated by the hand of Marguerite of Burgundy. Philippe d'Aulnay.* Last adieu of brother to brother, given by that brother to me. Why, look, look! [*Taking the lamp.*] Perish, with this last flame, your last hope!... Am I free now, Buridan? Can I do with you what I choose?

Bur. What will you do with me?

Marg. Are you not arrested as the murderer of Philippe d'Aulnay? what is done with murderers?

Bur. And what tribunal will try me without hearing me?

Marg. Tribunal? Why, you are mad! Are men tried who carry such secrets within them? There are poisons so strong that they break the glass that holds them. Your secret is one of those poisons. Buridan, when a man like you is arrested, he is bound as you are bound, he is placed in a dungeon like this one. If it is not desired to destroy his soul as well as his body, at midnight a

priest and a hangman are brought into his prison : the priest begins. There is, in that prison, an iron ring like this one, walls as silent and as thick as these, walls that deaden cries, that stifle sobs, that absorb the death-agony. The priest goes out first, the hangman next ; then, next morning, when the warder enters the prison, he mounts again in alarm, and tells that the criminal, whose hands had imprudently been left free, has strangled himself, a proof that he was guilty.

Bur. I see that we are equally frank, Marguerite; I told you my plans and you tell me yours.

Marg. You mock me, or rather you try to mock me ; your pride revolts at my victory ; you would like to make me believe that you have some means of escaping me to torment my sleep or my pleasures ; but no, no, your smile does not deceive me ; the damned laugh also, that it may be thought they have no pain. No, you cannot escape me, can you ? It is impossible, you are securely tied, these walls are very thick, these doors very solid ; no, no, you cannot escape me, and I go... Adieu, Buridan ; have you anything to say to me ?

Bur. Only one thing.

Marg. Speak.

Bur. It is a reminiscence of my youth that I wish to relate to you. In 1293, twenty years ago now, Burgundy was happy ; for she had a beloved duke, Robert II... Do not interrupt me, and spare ten minutes to the man for whom eternity is about to begin... Duke Robert had a young and beautiful daughter, with the form of an angel, and the soul of a demon ; she was called Marguerite of Burgundy... Let me finish... Duke Robert had a young and

handsome page, with a heart open and trustful, with fair hair and ruddy face ; he was called Lyonnet de Bournonville... Ah ! you listen with more attention, it seems to me ! The page and the maiden loved one another ; he who had seen them both at that time and saw them again to-day would assuredly not recognise them ; and perhaps they themselves, if they met, would not recognise each other.

Marg. What is he coming to ?

Bur. Oh ! you will see, it is a strange story. The page and the maiden, then, loved one another without anyone's knowledge. Every night a ladder of silk carried the lover into his mistress's arms, and every night the mistress and her lover arranged a meeting for the following night. One day, Duke Robert's daughter announced with tears to Lyonnet de Bournonville that she was about to become a mother.

Marg. Great God !

Bur. Help me to change my place, Marguerite ; this position fatigues me. [*Marguerite assists him ; Buridan laughs.*] Thanks... How far had I got, Marguerite ?

Marg. The duke's daughter was about to become a mother.

Bur. Ah, yes, that was it... Eight days afterwards, the secret was no longer a secret to her father, and the duke announced to his daughter that on the morrow the doors of a convent would open for her and, like those of the tomb, would close upon her for ever. Night reunited the two lovers. Oh ! it was a terrible night ; Lyonnet loved Marguerite as Gaultier loves you ; a night of sobs and imprecations ! oh, how well young Marguerite promised to become what she has been !

Marg. Go on, go on.

Bur. These cords are eating into my flesh and hurting me, Marguerite. [*Marguerite cuts the cords that bind Buridan's arms; he watches her do it with a laugh.*] She carried a dagger as you did, young Marguerite, and she said: "Lyonnet, Lyonnet, if my father were to die between this and to-morrow, there would be no convent, there would be no separation, there would be nothing but love." I do not know how it happened, but the dagger passed from her hands into those of Lyonnet de Bournonville; an arm took hold of him, led him in the darkness, guided him as if across the tortuous paths of hell, raised a curtain, and the armed page and the sleeping duke were face to face. The old man had a noble head, peaceful and beautiful, and the assassin has often seen it since in his dreams; for he murdered him, the infamous wretch! But Marguerite, Marguerite the young and fair, did not enter the convent, and she became Queen of Navarre, then of France. The following day, the page received, by a man named Orsini, a letter and some money; Marguerite implored him to depart for ever: she said that after their joint crime, they could never see one another again.

Marg. Imprudent girl!

Bur. Yes, was she not imprudent? for the letter, in her own hand throughout, signed by her, reproduced the crime in all its details, fully revealing her complicity. Marguerite the queen would not now do what Marguerite the young girl did, would she, imprudent one?

Marg. Then Lyonnet de Bournonville departed, did he not? and no one knows what became of him,

he will never be seen again. The letter is lost or destroyed, and cannot be a proof. What, then, can Marguerite, Queen Regent of France, have to do with this story?

Bur. Lyonnet de Bournonville is not dead; and you know it well, Marguerite; for I saw you tremble a little ago when you recognised him.

Marg. And the letter, the letter?

Bur. The letter will be the first petition presented to-morrow to Louis X., King of France, when he re-enters Paris.

Marg. You say that to frighten me; it is not true, it cannot be true; you would have made use of that means first.

Bur. You took pains to provide me with another; I reserved this for a second occasion; have I not done better?

Marg. The letter?

Bur. Your husband will return it to you to-morrow... You have told me what the punishment of murderers was. Marguerite, do you know what is that of parricides and adulteresses? Listen: their hair is cut off with red-hot scissors; their breasts are opened, while they still live, and their hearts torn out; they are burned, their ashes are thrown to the wind, and for three days the corpses are dragged about the city on a bier.

Marg. Mercy! Mercy!

Bur. Come, do me a last service, Marguerite; untie these cords. [*He holds out his hands, Marguerite unfastens them.*] Ah! It is good to be free! Let the executioner come now! there are cords. Why, what ails you? To-morrow a cry will go through the city: "Buridan, the murderer

of Philippe d'Aulnay, has strangled himself in his prison." Another cry will answer from the Louvre: "Marguerite of Burgundy is condemned to the punishment of adulteresses and parricides."

Marg. Mercy, Buridan!

Bur. I am Buridan no longer: I am Lyonnet de Bournonville...the page of Marguerite...the assassin of Duke Robert.

Marg. Do not cry so loud.

Bur. Why, what can you fear? These walls deaden cries, stifle sobs, absorb the death-agony.

Marg. What is it you wish? what is it you wish?

Bur. To-morrow you re-enter the city of Paris on the King's right; I wish to enter on his left; we will go to meet him together.

Marg. We will,

Bur. Good.

Marg. And the letter?...

Bur. When it is presented to him, it will be I who will take it; shall I not be prime minister?

Marg. Marigny is not yet dead.

Bur. Yesterday, at Orsini's tavern, you swore to me that at ten o'clock he would be disposed of.

Marg. I have still an hour left, it is more than enough in which to keep my promise, and I shall give the order...

Bur. Wait; a last question, Marguerite. The children of Marguerite of Burgundy and of Lyonnet de Bournonville, what has become of them?

Marg. I gave them in charge to a man.

Bur. His name?

Marg. I do not recollect...

Bur. Think, Marguerite, and you will remember.

Marg. Orsini, I believe.

Bur. [*Calling.*] Orsini! Orsini!

Marg. What are you doing?

Bur. Is he not there?

Marg. No.

[*Orsini enters.*]

Bur. Here he is. Approach, Orsini. Tomorrow I will be prime minister... You do not believe it? Tell him, madam, that he may believe.

Marg. It is the truth.

Bur. My first act when in power will be to cause torture to be administered to a certain Orsini, who was at the court of Duke Robert II.

Ors. And why, my lord? why?

Bur. In order to learn from him how he carried out the orders he had received from his sovereign, Marguerite of Burgundy, regarding two children.

Ors. Oh! pardon, my lord, forgive me for not causing them to be put to death, as I had been commanded.

Marg. It was not I who gave the order...it was...

Bur. Silence, Marguerite.

Ors. Pardon me that I had not the courage; the two boys were so helpless and so handsome!

Bur. What did you do with them, wretch?

Ors. I gave them to one of my men to expose; and I gave out that they were dead.

Bur. And this man?

Ors. He is one of the warders of this prison; he is called Landry... Pardon!

Bur. 'Tis well, Orsini; it was a trait that does you honour! an idea that occurred to you and did not occur to a mother, that it was not necessary to kill one's children, when one could expose them. Orsini, you may have committed many crimes, but

that was an action that atones for them; so you have still a heart left! embrace me, Orsini! embrace me. Oh! you shall have as much gold as these children weighed; two boys, were they not? O my children! my children!... Ah! enough, enough, you see the Queen pities me.

Ors. What more have I to do, my lord?

Bur. Take this lamp and light the way... Take my arm, madam.

Marg. Where are we going?

Bur. To meet King Louis X., who re-enters to-morrow his good city of Paris.

ACT IV

BURIDAN

SEVENTH TABLEAU

A hall in the Louvre; door in the background, with two side-doors; two others, to the left, one to the right nearer the front of the stage, and a casement on the same side in the foreground.

SCENE I

GAULTIER, then CHARLOTTE.

Gaul. [*Entering.*] Marguerite! Marguerite! she will not have left her room yet.

Char. [*Appearing at the Queen's door.*] Is it you, your majesty?... Seigneur Gaultier!

Gaul. Charlotte, our sovereign, whom God preserve! is in good health, I hope?...

Char. I do not know, my lord ; I have just left her room.

Gaul. Well ?

Char. She has not slept there.

Gaul. What is that you say, Charlotte ?

Char. The truth... Ah ! mon Dieu ! I am very anxious.

Gaul. What do you say ?

Char. I say, my lord, that I have just come to see if the Queen was not in this hall.

Gaul. The Queen is not in her apartment, she is not here, she is not in the palace... Oh ! my God ! do you know nothing, child, do you know nothing to show us where she may be ?

Char. Yesterday evening she asked me for her cloak to go out, and I have not seen her since.

Gaul. You have not seen her since?... Perhaps you know where she was going... Tell me, that I may trace her movements, that I may know what has become of her, that I may find her again.

Char. I do not know where she was going, my lord.

Gaul. Listen, fear nothing ; if it is a secret she has confided to you, tell it to me, for she confides all her secrets to me too ; fear nothing, and tell me what you know ; I will tell her that I forced you to tell me, and she will pardon you ; and as for myself, Charlotte, you will remove a dagger from my heart ; she told you where she was going, did she not ?

Char. She told me nothing, I swear.

Gaul. Yes, yes, she recommended discretion ; you do well, child, to be discreet... But me, me ; you know she would have told me, as she did you,

where she was going ; tell me... Hold, do you desire anything you did not expect to obtain in this world ?

Char. I desire nothing except to know what has become of the Queen.

Gaul. Ask what you will, and tell me where she is, for you must know, must you not ? ask what you will ; if jewels, I will load you with them ; if you have a poor fiancé, I will dower him ; if you wish to have him near you, I will make him one of my guards ; that which the daughter of a count or a baron would not hope to have, you shall obtain for one single answer... Charlotte, where is Marguerite ? where is the Queen ?

Char. Alas ! alas ! my lord, I do not know ; but perhaps...

Gaul. Speak ! speak !

Char. The Italian, Orsini...

Gaul. Yes, yes, you are right, and I shall run to him, Charlotte... Oh ! if she returns in my absence, ask her to grant me a moment before the King's return ; you will entreat her, will you not ? you will tell her that it is I, I, her faithful and devoted servant, who beg for it ; you will tell her that I am in despair, that I will go mad if she does not speak a word to me, a word to reassure and console me.

Char. Away, away ; see, they are opening the apartments.

Gaul. Yes, yes.

Char. Courage, my lord ! I go to pray for you.

[*Exit Gaultier ; Charlotte returns to the Queen's room.*]

SCENE II

SAVOISY, PIERREFONDS, Nobles, then RAOUL.

Sav. You have not gone to meet the King, Sire de Pierrefonds?

Pierre. No, my lord; if the Queen goes, I shall accompany her; and you?

Sav. I shall await our master here: there is such a great concourse of people on the road, that no one can pass...I do not wish to be mixed up with all those clowns.

Pierre. And then you have reflected that as the real King was not called Louis the Quarrelsome, but Marguerite of Burgundy, it would be better to pay one's court to Marguerite of Burgundy than to Louis the Quarrelsome?

Sav. Perhaps there is something of that kind in it. [*To Sire Raoul, who enters.*] Good day, Baron; what news?

Raoul. The King is coming, my lords.

Sav. And does the Queen not appear?

Raoul. The Queen has gone to meet him, she returns at his right hand.

The People. [*Outside.*] Long live the King! long live the King!

Raoul. Hark, do you hear the cries of the mob?

Sav. We have made a mistake.

Raoul. But perhaps I would greatly surprise you if I told you who is on his left.

Sav. Pardieu! It would be amusing if it were any other than Gaultier d'Aulnay!

Raoul. Gaultier d'Aulnay is not even in the cortege.

Sav. He is not in the cortege, he is not here; will there have been a fête last night at the Tower of Nesle? will there be another corpse or two on the banks of the Seine?... Tell us, who was on the King's left?

Raoul. My lords, on his left, on a superb horse, there was the Italian captain whom we saw arrested yesterday by Gaultier, under the balcony of the Louvre, and conducted to the Grand Châtelet.

Sav. It is impossible.

Raoul. You will see for yourself.

Pierre. What do you say to this, Savois?

Sav. I say that we live in very strange times... Yesterday, Marigny prime minister... to-day, Marigny arrested... Yesterday, this captain arrested... perhaps, to-day, this captain will be prime minister... One would think, upon my honour, that God is playing at dice with Satan for this fair kingdom of France.

The People. [*Outside.*] *Noël! Noël!* long live the King!

Pierre. And there are the people, who care little who is arrested or who is made prime minister, crying "*Noël!*" loud enough to split one's head, as the King passes.

SCENE III

The Same, THE KING, MARGUERITE, BURIDAN, several Nobles.

The Nobles. [*Entering.*] The King, gentlemen, the King!

The People. *Noël! Noël!* long live the King.

The King. [*Entering.*] Greeting, gentlemen, greeting! We are fortunate to have left so fine an army in Champagne, and to find so fine a nobility here.

Sav. Sire, the day on which you will re-unite army and nobility to march against your enemies will be a fine day for us.

The King. And to assist you to pay the expenses of the campaign, gentlemen, I am about to give the order to levy a tax on the town of Paris on the occasion of my return.

The People. [*Below the window.*] Long live the King! Long live the King!

The King. [*Going to the balcony.*] Yes, my children, I am engaged in reducing the taxes, I wish you to be happy, for I love you.

Bur. [*To the Queen.*] Remember our bargain: power to be ours, France to be ours.

Marg. Beginning from to-day you take your place with me in the council.

Bur. Be of my opinion there, I will be of yours.

The People. [*Below the window.*] Long live the King! long live the King!

The King. [*From the balcony.*] Yes, yes, my children. [*Turning towards Buridan.*] You hear, Sire Lyonnet de Bournonville? you will cause a new return to be made of the professions and trades of the town of Paris, so that everyone shall pay for this new tax what he paid for the other; we must be fair.

Sav. Lyonnet de Bournonville! He does not appear to be a soldier of fortune, it is an old name.

The King. We shall return to the council. Gentlemen, before you take leave of us, we give you our

hand to kiss. [*He seats himself on an armchair which a page has placed in the middle of the stage, a little in the background. The group of nobles which forms round the King leaves the two sides of the stage free.*]

Gaul. [*Entering quickly.*] The Queen! they told me... She is there!

Marg. Gaultier!... Approach, Captain, and kiss the King's hand. [*Low, while he passes in front of her.*] I love you, I love you only, I will love you always!

Gaul. Buridan! Buridan here!

Marg. Silence! [*Landry appears on the balcony.*]

SCENE IV

The Same, LANDRY on the balcony.

Bur. [*Looking at the balcony and perceiving Landry.*] Landry!

Land. [*Showing him the iron box.*] Captain?

Bur. You see!

Land. Good.

Bur. The box?

Land. The twelve gold marks?

Bur. I will bring them to you to-night.

Land. Where?

Bur. At my old lodging, at the house of Pierre de Bourges, the innkeeper.

Land. I will return the box to you to-night.

Bur. I have many things to ask you about.

Land. I will tell you about them all.

Bur. Good. [*Turning round to the guards.*]
Make those men stand back,

The Guards. Back, clowns ! back !

Plebeians. [*Climbing up the balcony.*] Long live the King ! long live the King ! [*The guards force the people to descend by beating them with the butts of their halberds.*]

The King. Now let us attend to the business of the kingdom... Adieu, my lords !

An Officer. Way for the King ! [*Exit the King at the back.*] Way for the Queen. [*The Queen passes.*] Way for the prime minister ! [*Buridan passes and enters the council chamber ; exeunt the guards.*]

SCENE V

SAVOISY, PIERREFONDS, GAULTIER, RAOUL,
NOBLES.

Sav. Come, my lords ; are we awake, or are we sleeping ? As for me, I take up my position here... [*He sits down.*] If I am asleep, I will be awakened ; if I am awake, I will be put outside ; but I want to know how these things are going to end.

Pierre. Suppose we ask Gaultier, perhaps he is in the secret. Gaultier !

Gaul. [*Throwing himself into an armchair on the other side.*] O ! leave me, my lords ; I know nothing about it, I guess nothing... Leave me, I pray you.

Sav. The door opens.

The Officer. [*Entering from the back.*] Sire de Pierrefonds.

Pierre. Here,

The Officer. An order from the King. [*Exit. All the courtiers gather round Pierrefonds.*]

Pierre. [*Reading.*] "Order to fetch Sire En-guerrand de Marigny from Vincennes and conduct him to Montfaucon."

Sav. Good! it is at the foot of a death-sentence that the King has put his first signature; that promises well. Many congratulations on your mission!

Pierre. I should prefer another; but whatever it be, I am going to perform it. Adieu, gentlemen. [*Exit.*]

Sav. In any case, we are certain on one point: that the prime minister will be hanged... The King had promised to do something for his people.

The Officer. [*Entering.*] The Count of Savois?

Sav. Here.

The Officer. Letters-patent from the King. [*Exit.*]

Omnes. [*Closing round Savois.*] Ah! let us see, let us see.

Sav. Sang-Dieu! gentlemen, you are in a greater hurry than I am: the first order does not greatly tempt me to open the second; and if by chance it was one of you I had to take to be hanged also, he would be somewhat obliged to me for the delay... [*He unfolds the parchment slowly.*] My Captain's commission in the guards! Do you know of a vacancy, gentlemen?

Raoul. No; unless Gaultier...

Sav. [*Looking at Gaul.*] By Heaven! you make me think it likely.

Raoul. No matter; receive our congratulations.

Sav. 'Tis well, gentlemen, 'tis well. I must at once take my post in the royal apartments... Remain

here, if such is your good pleasure. Gentlemen, so far as I am concerned, I have learned what I wanted to know. [*Laughing.*] The King is a great King, and the new minister a great man. [*Exit.*

The Officer. [*Re-entering.*] Sire Gaultier d'Aulnay!

Gaul. Eh?

The Officer. Letters-patent from the King.

Gaul. [*Rising.*] The King! [*He takes them with astonishment.*]

The Officer. My lords, the King, our master, will not receive after the council; you are at liberty to withdraw.

Gaul. [*Reading.*] "Letters-patent from the King, bestowing on Sire d'Aulnay the government of the province of Champagne." The government of a province to me!... "Order to quit Paris to-morrow, and proceed to Troyes." I, quit Paris!...

Raoul. Sire d'Aulnay, we congratulate you; justice is done, and the Queen could not choose better.

Gaul. Congratulate the devil; for, from being an archangel, he became king of hell. [*He tears up the order.*] I will not go! [*Addressing the gentlemen.*] Has the King not told you that you were at liberty to withdraw, gentlemen?

Raoul. And you?

Gaul. I remain.

Raoul. If we do not see you again before your departure, a prosperous voyage, Sire Gaultier.

Gaul. God preserve you! [*Exeunt Nobles.*

SCENE VI

GAULTIER, alone.

To depart!...to depart, to leave Paris!... Is that what I was promised?... Can any one tell me on what ground I have been walking these last few days? Around me, all is deception; every object appears real to me until I touch it, then it disappears between my hands...Phantoms!

SCENE VII

GAULTIER, MARGUERITE.

Marg. [*Entering from behind.*] Gaultier!

Gaul. Ah! it is you at last, Madam?

Marg. Silence!

Gaul. I have been silent long enough, I must speak, if every word were to cost me a year of my life... You mock me, Marguerite, at the same time promising and taking back your word?... Am I a toy to be amused with? am I a child to be laughed at?... Yesterday, you swore that nothing would separate us, and to-day...I am sent far away from Paris, into some province or other!

Marg. You have received the King's order?

Gaul. [*Pointing to the fragments on the ground.*] It is there, see!

Marg. Restrain yourself.

Gaul. You could approve that order?

Marg. I was forced to.

Gaul. Forced! and by whom? who can force the Queen!

Marg. A demon who has power to.

Gaul. But who is he? Tell me.

Marg. Pretend to obey, and perhaps, between now and to-morrow, I may be able to see you and explain everything.

Gaul. And you wish me to withdraw on an assurance of this kind?

Marg. You will not leave Paris; but go now, go!

Gaul. I will come back: I must have the explanation of this secret.

Marg. Yes, yes, you will come back; there is some one, some one is coming!

Gaul. Remember your promise. Adieu.

[*He rushes out.*]

Marg. It was time!

SCENE VIII

MARGUERITE, BURIDAN, entering from behind.

Bur. Pardon me if I interrupt your farewells, Marguerite.

Marg. You have not seen rightly, Buridan.

Bur. Is that not Gaultier going away?

Marg. You have not heard rightly, then; they were not farewells.

Bur. How is that?

Marg. Because he is not going away.

Bur. The King commands him to.

Marg. And I forbid him to.

Bur. Marguerite, are you forgetting our compact?

Marg. I promised to make you minister, and I have kept my word; you promised to leave me Gaultier, and you demand his departure!

Bur. We said: "France for us two," and not, "for us three;" this young man would be a third

in our power and in our secrets, it is impossible !

Marg. It will be so, nevertheless.

Bur. Have you forgotten that you were in my power ?

Marg. Yes, yesterday, when you were only Buridan, the prisoner, not to-day that you are Lyonnet de Bournonville, prime minister.

Bur. How is that ?

Marg. You cannot ruin me without ruining yourself.

Bur. Would that have stopped me yesterday ?

Marg. It will stop you to-day. Yesterday, you had everything to gain and nothing to lose but life... To-day, as well as life, you have honours, rank, fortune, wealth, power to lose... You would fall from too great a height—would you not?—for the hope of breaking me in your fall to determine you to throw yourself over !... We have arrived together at the summit of a steep and slippery mountain ; believe me, Buridan, we must support one another, rather than threaten.

Bur. Do you love him much, then ?

Marg. More than my life.

Bur. Love in the heart of Marguerite ! I should have thought it could be squeezed and wrung without a single human feeling issuing from it... You fall short of what I expected of you. Marguerite, if we wish nothing to stand in the way of our will, when we bid it proceed in any direction, that will must be strong enough to crush everything it encounters in its progress, without costing our eyes one tear, our heart one regret... We are become things that govern, and not creatures subject to pity. Oh, woe, woe to you, Marguerite ! I believed you

a demon and you are only a fallen angel.

Marg. Listen : if it is not love, invent a name for my weakness ; but do not let him go away, I entreat you.

Bur. [*Aside.*] They would be two against me, it is too many.

Marg. What do you say ?

Bur. [*Aside.*] I am ruined, if I do not ruin them.

[*Aloud.*] Not let him go away?...

Marg. Yes, I entreat you.

Bur. And what if I am jealous of him ?

Marg. You, jealous !

Bur. What if the remembrance of what I have been to you renders the thought that another is loved by you intolerable to me ; what if that which you have taken for ambition, for hatred, for vengeance, if all that was only a love I could not extinguish, and which reproduced itself in all these shapes ; what if I only wished to rise to reach you ; what if, now that I have arrived, I only wanted you ; what if, for the sake of my old rights, my rights older than his, I sacrificed everything for you ; what if, in exchange for one of those nights on which Lyonnet the page slipped tremblingly into young Marguerite's room not to emerge till the dawn began, I returned to you those letters to which I owe my present position ; what if I gave up to you my means to fortune in order to prove to you that my fortune had only one object, that, that object attained, the rest matters little to me ; tell me, tell me, if you found in me such devotion, such love, would you not consent to his departure ?

Marg. Do you speak sincerely, or do you jest, Lyonnet ?

Bur. A rendezvous to-night, and to-night I give you back your letters ; but no longer a rendezvous, Marguerite, like those of the tavern and the prison, no longer a rendezvous of hatred and of threats ; no, no, a rendezvous of love ; and to-morrow, to-morrow, you will be able to keep him and ruin me, since everything that gives me my power will be given up to you.

Marg. But suppose I consent, I cannot receive you here, in this palace.

Bur. Can you not go out as you please ?

Marg. Can I see you elsewhere without ruining myself ?

Bur. The Tower of Nesle ?

Marg. Would you go there ?

Bur. Have I not been there already without knowing that you were waiting for me there ?

Marg. [*Aside.*] He gives himself into my hands !
[*Aloud.*] Listen, Buridan, it is a strange weakness ; but the sight of you recalls so many moments of happiness, your voice awakens so many memories of love that I believed buried in the depths of my heart...

Bur. Marguerite !...

Marg. Lyonnet !...

Bur. Will Gaultier set out to-morrow ?

Marg. I will tell him to to-night. [*Giving him the key.*] There is the key of the Tower of Nesle ; let us separate. [*Aside.*] Ah ! Buridan, if you escape me this time... [*Exit.*

Bur. It is the key of your tomb, Marguerite ! but, do not be afraid, I will not bury you alone.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IX

MARGUERITE, re-entering; then ORSINI.

Marg. [*In a whisper, going to a side-door.*]
Orsini! Orsini!

Ors. I am here, your Majesty.

Marg. To-night, at the Tower of Nesle, four men armed and yourself.

Ors. Have you any other orders?

Marg. No, not for the moment; I shall tell you there what you will have to do; go. [*Exit Orsini; she turns and looks about her.*] No one, 'tis well.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE X

BURIDAN, then SAVOISY.

Bur. [*Entering by the other side-door, with a parchment in his hand.*] Count de Savois! Count de Savois!

Sav. I am here, my lord.

Bur. The King has learned with sorrow of the massacres which afflict his good city of Paris; he supposes, with some reason, that the murderers assemble at the Tower of Nesle. To-night, at half-past nine, you will repair thither with ten men, and you will arrest all who are found there, whatever their title and rank; here is the order.

Sav. Then I shall not have been long in entering upon my official duties.

Bur. And you may say that this is one of the most important you will ever fulfil!

[*He goes out by one side-door and Savois by the other.*]

ACT V

GAULTIER D'AULNAY

EIGHTH TABLEAU

The Tavern of Pierre de Bourges.

SCENE I

LANDRY, alone, calculating.

Twelve gold marks!... that makes, if I count properly, six hundred and eighteen livres of Tours... If the captain keeps his word and pays me that sum in exchange for this little iron box for which I would not give six farthings, I shall be able to keep his advice and become an honest man... Nevertheless, it will be necessary to do something... What shall I do?... To be sure! with my money I shall raise a company; I shall take command of it; I shall place myself in the service of some great noble; I shall pocket all my pay, and make my men live on the peasants. God's life! it is a profession in which neither wine nor women are lacking; then, if some traveller pass a little too well laden with gold or merchandise, as the kingdom of heaven is intended principally for the poor, we shall make his entry therein easier. God's blood! that is, if I am not deceived, an honest and joyous life; and, provided one performs faithfully one's Christian duties, cudgels some gipsy now and again, flays some Jew alive, salvation appears to me as easy a thing as swallowing this glass of wine... Ah! here is the captain.

SCENE II

*LANDRY, BURIDAN.**Bur.* Very good, Landry.*Land.* I am waiting for you, you see.*Bur.* And drinking while you wait?*Land.* I know no better companion than wine.*Bur.* [*Pulling out his purse.*] Unless it be the gold with which one buys it.*Land.* Here is your box.*Bur.* Here are your twelve gold marks.*Land.* Thanks.*Bur.* Now, I have made an appointment here with a young man: he is coming presently, leave this room to me for a moment. As soon as you see him go out, come back, I want to have a talk with you. [*A noise is heard on the stair.*]*Land.* Pardieu! he followed you closely. Hark, there he is, breaking his neck on the stair.*Bur.* Good: leave us.*Gaul.* [*At the door.*] Captain Buridan?*Land.* There he is.

SCENE III

*BURIDAN, GAULTIER.**Bur.* [*Smiling.*] I thought you knew my new title and my new name, Sire Gaultier? I was mistaken, apparently; since this morning I have been named Lyonnet de Bournonville and I have been called prime minister.*Gaul.* It matters little to me by what name you are named, it matters little to me what title is yours;

you are a man whom another man comes to summon to keep his promise : are you prepared to fulfil it ?

Bur. I promised to let you know who was your brother's murderer.

Gaul. That is not it : you promised me something else.

Bur. I promised to tell you how Enguerrand de Marigny passed in one day from the palace of the Louvre to the gibbet of Montfaucon.

Gaul. That is not it : whether he is guilty or not, is a matter between his judges and God ; you promised me something else.

Bur. Was it to tell you how it happens that the man you arrested yesterday is prime minister to-day ?

Gaul. No, no : it matters little to me whether his means come to him from God or from Satan ; there are terrible secrets in it all that I do not wish to fathom. My brother is dead, God will avenge him ; Marigny is dead, God will judge him... That is not it : you promised me something else.

Bur. Explain yourself.

Gaul. You promised to let me see Marguerite.

Bur. So your love for this woman stifles every other feeling !... Brotherly love is only a name, the bloody intrigues of the Court are only a joke... Oh ! you are mad indeed !

Gaul. You promised to let me see Marguerite.

Bur. Do you need me for that ? Can you not enter by the secret door of the alcove, or do you tremble lest, this night as on that other night, Marguerite should not return to the Louvre ?

Gaul. [*In astonishment.*] Who told you that ?

Bur. The man with whom Marguerite passed the night.

Gaul. Blasphemy!... It is *you* who are mad, Buridan.

Bur. Calm yourself, boy; and do not twist your sword in its sheath... Marguerite is a beautiful and passionate woman, is she not? What did she say when you asked her where the scratch on her cheek came from?

Gaul. My God! my God! have pity on me!

Bur. She has written to you, no doubt?

Gaul. What is that to you?

Bur. She depicts passion in a magical and ardent manner, does she not?

Gaul. Your accursed eyes have never seen, I trust, the sacred writing of the Queen?

Bur. [*Opening the iron box.*] Do you recognise it?... Read: "Thy beloved Marguerite."

Gaul. It is sorcery! it is devilry!

Bur. Is it not sweet, when one is beside her, when she speaks to you of love, is it not sweet to pass one's hand through her long hair, which she allows to hang down so voluptuously, and to cut off a tress like this? [*He shows him a tress of hair he has taken from the box.*]

Gaul. It is her writing!... the colour of her hair!... Tell me that you stole this letter from her; tell me that you cut off this hair by surprise.

Bur. You shall ask herself: I promised to let you see her.

Gaul. At once! at once!

Bur. But perhaps she has not yet arrived at the trysting-place?

Gaul. Trysting-place!... Who has an appointment with her?... Tell me his name... Oh! I thirst for his blood and his life!

Bur. Ungrateful! and what if he gave up his place to you?

Gaul. To me!

Bur. What if, whether because of his own satiety, whether out of compassion for you, he no longer wished this woman; what if he gives her up to you, gives her back to you, presents her to you?

Gaul. [*Drawing his dagger.*] Ah! malediction!...

Bur. Young man!...

Gaul. O my God!... mercy!...

Bur. It is half-past eight, Marguerite waits: Gaultier, will you let her wait?

Gaul. Where is she? where is she?

Bur. At the Tower of Nesle!

Gaul. Good! [*He makes to go out.*]

Bur. You forget the key.

Gaul. Give it me.

Bur. One word more.

Gaul. Speak.

Bur. It was she who killed your brother.

Gaul. Damnation!... [*He disappears.*]

SCENE IV

BURIDAN, alone.

Very good, go and join her, and ruin one another; very good. If Savoisy is as punctual as they are, he will make strange prisoners. Now there is but one thing for me still to learn: what has become of these two unfortunate children. Oh! if I had them to make them share in my fortune and to lean upon them!... Landry will be very clever if I do not succeed in learning from him what has become of them. Here he comes.

SCENE V

BURIDAN, LANDRY.

Land. You have something more to tell me, captain?

Bur. Oh! nothing... Tell me, how much time does that young man require to go from here to the Tower of Nesle?

Land. Seeing there are no boats now, he will have to go up the river to the Bridge aux Moulins; nearly half-an-hour.

Bur. Very well; put that hour-glass on the table. I wished to talk of our old friendship, Landry, of our wars in Italy. Take a glass and sit down.

Land. Yes, yes, they were hard-fought wars and a happy time; the days passed in battles and the nights in orgies. Do you remember, captain, that rich prior of Genoa's wines, that we drank to the last drop; that convent of girls that we carried off to the last nun? All these things are joyful memories, but great sins, captain.

Bur. On the day of our death, our sins will be put on one side of the scale and our good actions on the other: I hope you done enough of the latter for that side to be the heavier.

Land. Yes, yes, I have indeed done some meritorious actions, and through them I hope...

[*They drink.*]

Bur. Tell them to me, that will edify me.

Land. During the trial of the Templars which took place at the beginning of the present year, there was a witness wanted to make the cause of God triumph, and condemn Jacques de Molay, the

grand master ; a worthy benedictine cast his eyes on me and dictated to me a false testimony, which I zealously repeated word for word before the Court, as if it were true ; two days after, the heretics were burned, to the great glory of God and of our holy religion.

Bur. Continue, my worthy friend ; I have heard something about some children... [*They drink.*]

Land. Yes, that was in Germany ; poor little angel ! I hope it prays up above for me, that one. Picture to yourself, captain, we were chasing some gipsies, who are, as you know, pagans, idolaters and infidels ; we were passing through their village, which was all in flames. I hear weeping in a burning house, I enter ; there was a poor gipsy child there, abandoned. I look about me, I find some water in a dish ; in a trice, I baptise it ; behold it a Christian ; good. I was about to put it in a place where the fire could not reach it, when I reflected that next day the parents would return, and deuce take the baptism ! Then I laid it nicely in its cradle and I rejoined my comrades ; as I turned my back, the roof fell in.

Bur. [*Abstractedly.*] And the child perished ?

Land. Yes ; but who felt very sheepish ? Why, Satan, who thought he was coming to fetch an idolatrous soul and who burned his fingers on a Christian one.

Bur. Yes, I see you have always had a well-directed religion ; but I wished to speak of other children...of two children that Orsini...

Land. I know what you mean.

Bur. Ah !

Land. Yes, yes, it was two little ones that Orsini

had told me to throw into the water, like cats that have not begun to see properly, and whom I was tempted to keep in this world, seeing that he assured me they were Christians.

Bur. [*Eagerly.*] And what did you do with them?

Land. I exposed them on the steps of Notre-Dame, where these little creatures are usually put.

Bur. Do you know what became of them?

Land. No; I know they were picked up, that is all; for at night they were no longer there.

Bur. And did you not put some mark on them that you might recognise them?

Land. Oh yes, oh yes,... I made—they cried very hard, indeed, but it was for their good—I made a cross with my dagger on their left arms.

Bur. [*Rising.*] A red cross? a cross on the left arm? the same cross on both? Oh! say it was not a cross you made on them, say it was not on the left arm, say it was another mark...

Land. It was a cross and nothing else; it was on the left arm and nowhere else.

Bur. Oh! woe! woe! my children! Philippe! Gaultier! one dead, the other about to die!... both assassinated, one by her, the other by me! the justice of God!... Landry, where could we get a boat so that we could get there before that young man?

Land. At Simon the fisherman's.

Bur. Then a ladder, a sword, and follow me.

Land. Where, captain?

Bur. To the Tower of Nesle, wretch!

NINTH TABLEAU

The Tower of Nesle.

SCENE I

MARGUERITE, ORSINI.

Marg. You understand, Orsini? it is a last necessity, it is one murder more, but it is the last. This man knows all our secrets, our secrets of life or of death; yours and mine. If I had not struggled for three days against him until I was tired of the struggle, we should have been both ruined by now.

Ors. But this man must have devils at his orders, to be so well informed of everything we do?

Marg. It matters little in what manner he learned, the fact is that he knows. With a word, this man has brought me to his feet like a slave; he has seen me unfasten one by one the bonds with which I had loaded him... and this man, who knows our secrets, who has seen me thus, who can ruin us; this man has had the imprudence to ask me for a meeting, a meeting at the Tower of Nesle! I hesitated, nevertheless; but was it not very imprudent of him? it was tempting God! At least, he invited himself; it is so much less for remorse.

Ors. Very well then, this one more; I who asked you to stop, am the first to say: "It is necessary."

Marg. Yes, is it not necessary, Orsini? You see clearly, you wish also, that he should die; if I did not order you, you would strike him for your own safety?

Ors. Yes, yes! but a truce after that; if your heart is not satisfied, our iron grows blunt, and this will be enough, it will be too much for our eternal repose.

Marg. Yes; but our tranquillity in this world demands it. So long as this man lives, I will not be Queen, I will not be mistress either of my power or of my treasures, or of my life; but he dead!... oh! I swear to you, no more nights passed outside the Louvre, no more orgies at the Tower, no more corpses in the Seine! Then I will give you enough gold to buy a province, and you will be free to return to your beautiful Italy or to remain in France. Listen: I will cause this tower to be razed to the ground; I will build a convent on the place, I will endow a community of nuns, to pray for me and for you; for, I tell you, Orsini, I am as tired as you are of all these loves and all these massacres... and it seems to me that God would pardon me if I did not add this last murder.

Ors. He knows our secrets, he can ruin us. Which way is he coming?

Marg. By this staircase.

Ors. After him, no more?

Marg. By the blood of Christ! I swear it.

Ors. I am going to post my men.

Marg. Listen! do you see nothing?

Ors. A boat guided by two men.

Marg. One of these men is he. There is no time to lose: go, go; but close this door, so that he cannot reach me. I cannot, I will not, see him again; perhaps he still has some secret which would save his life... Go, go, and shut me in.

[*Orsini goes out and closes the door.*]

SCENE II

MARGUERITE, alone.

Ah! Gaultier, my beloved lord! he has wished to separate us, this man, to separate us before we belong to one another! So long as he only wanted gold, I gave him it; honours, he had them; but he has wished to separate us, and he dies. Oh! if you knew that he wanted to separate us, Gaultier, you yourself would forgive me for killing him. Oh! this Lyonnet, this Buridan, this demon, let him return to the hell from which he has come! It is to him that I owe all my crimes! it is he who has made me all blood! Oh! if God is just, everything will fall upon his head. And I, oh! if I myself were my own judge, I do not know if I would dare to absolve myself. [*She listens at the door.*] There is nothing to be heard yet...nothing.

Land. [*At the foot of the Tower.*] Are you there?

Bur. Yes.

Marg. Someone at this window! Ah!

SCENE III

MARGUERITE, BURIDAN.

Bur. [*Shattering the window into fragments and stepping in.*] Marguerite! Marguerite! alone! ah, still alone, God be praised!

Marg. [*Drawing back.*] Help! help!

Bur. Fear nothing.

Marg. You, you! coming by that window! It is an apparition, a ghost.

Bur. Fear nothing, I tell you.

Marg. But why by that window and not by this door?

Bur. I will tell you immediately; but, first, I must speak to you; every minute that we lose is a treasure thrown into an abyss. Listen to me.

Marg. Do you come to threaten me again, to impose some condition on me?

Bur. No, no, you have no longer anything to fear. Hold, look, away goes my sword! away my dagger! away this box where all our secrets are! Now you can kill me, I have no arm, no armour; kill me, then take the box, burn what is in it, and sleep peacefully above my grave. No, I do not come to threaten you. I come to tell you... Oh! if you knew what I come to tell you! what happy days may still be in store for us, who have believed ourselves accursed...

Marg. Speak, I do not understand you.

Bur. Marguerite, is there nothing remaining in your heart, nothing womanly, nothing maternal?

Marg. What are you leading to?

Bur. Is she whom I have known so pure no longer accessible to any of the things that are sacred for God and for men?

Marg. Is it you who are come to speak to me of virtues and of purity! Satan becoming a preacher! It is strange, you will admit that yourself.

Bur. It matters little what name you give me, provided that my words touch you... Marguerite, have you never had an instant of repentance? Oh! answer me as you would answer to God, for, like God, I can do everything at this moment for your happiness or your despair... I can damn you or absolve you; I can, as you choose, open for you

hell or heaven... Assume that nothing has passed between us during these three days... forget everything, except your old confidence in me... Have you no longing to tell someone all that you have suffered?

Marg. Oh! yes, yes, for there is no priest to whom one dares to confide such secrets!... There is only an accomplice, and you are mine, mine, in all my crimes! Yes, Buridan... or rather Lyonnet, yes, all my crimes are in my first fault!... If the girl had not for your sake, wretched one, proved false to her duty, her first crime, the most horrible, would not have been committed; that I should not be suspected of the murder of my father, I destroyed my sons!... Pursued by remorse, I took refuge in crime!... I wished to stifle in blood and in pleasures the voice of conscience which cried to me unceasingly: "Woe!..." Not a word around me to recall me to virtue, lips of courtiers smiling to me, telling me I was beautiful, that the world was mine, that I could turn it upside-down for a moment of pleasure!... No strength to struggle!... passions, remorse... nights full of spectres if they were not full of pleasures!... Oh! yes, yes, it is only to an accomplice that one can tell such things!

Bur. But, tell me, if you had had your sons beside you?

Marg. Oh! then, would I have dared, under their eyes, when the voice of my children called me mother!... would I have dared to form plans of murder and of love! Oh! my sons would have saved me, they would have perhaps restored me to virtue... But I could not keep my sons! My sons! oh! I did not dare to pronounce the words!... for,

among the spectres I saw again, I did not see my sons, and I trembled lest, if, I called them, I should summon their shades !

Bur. Poor woman ! they were near you, and nothing said to you : "Marguerite, behold your sons!"

Marg. Near me ?

Bur. One of them, unhappy mother, one of them... you saw him at your knees, begging to be spared from the assassins' dagger ! You were there, you heard his prayers... and you did not recognise your child, and you said : "Strike !"

Marg. I, I !... Where was that ?

Bur. Here, on this spot where we stand.

Marg. Ah ! when ?

Bur. The day before yesterday.

Marg. Philippe d'Aulnay ? The vengeance of God !

Bur. That is what happened to the one... Marguerite, think of what the other is.

Marg. Gaultier ?

Bur. The lover of his mother !

Marg. Oh ! no, no ; thanks to heaven, it is not so, and I thank God for it, I thank Him for it on my knees... No, no, I can still call Gaultier my son, and Gaultier can call me his mother.

Bur. Are you speaking the truth ?

Marg. By the blood of the martyr that flowed there, I swear it !... Oh ! yes, yes, it is the hand of God that has directed all this, which has put in my heart this strange love, all maternal and not a lover's !... it is God... kind God, God the Saviour, who wished that with repentance happiness should come back into my life !... O my God ! thanks, thanks !

[*She prays.*

Bur. Well, Marguerite, do you pardon me? Do you still see in me an enemy?

Marg. Oh! no, no, the father of Gaultier!

Bur. So, you see, we can be happy yet!... Our ambitious wishes are fulfilled, there is no longer any conflict between us... Our son is the bond that attaches us to one another... Our secret will be buried between the three of us!

Marg. Yes, yes.

Bur. Do you believe you can still be happy?

Marg. Oh! yes, I believe it! and ten minutes ago, nevertheless, I did not hope it.

Bur. There is only one thing lacking to our happiness, is there not?

Marg. Our son, our son there, between the two of us...our Gaultier.

Bur. He is coming.

Marg. How can that be?

Bur. I gave him the key you gave me. He is coming by that staircase by which I was to come.

Marg. Malediction! as it was you I expected, I had placed... damnation!... I had placed assassins on your passage!

Bur. I recognise you there, Marguerite!

[*A cry is heard on the staircase.*]

Marg. It is he they are murdering!

Bur. Let us run!...

[*They go to the door and shake it.*]

Marg. Who has shut this door? Oh! it was I... I! Orsini! Orsini! do not strike, wretch!

Bur. [*Shaking the door.*] Accursed door!... My son, my son!

Marg. Gaultier!

Bur. Orsini!... demon!... hell!... Orsini!

Marg. Pity! pity!

Gaul. [*Without, crying and calling for help.*]
Help! help! to the rescue!

Marg. The door opens! [*She draws back.*]

SCÈNE IV

The Same, GAULTIER.

Gaul. [*Entering, all covered with blood.*] Marguerite! Marguerite! I bring you back the key of the Tower!

Marg. Poor boy, poor boy! I am your mother!

Gaul. My mother?... Then, mother, be accursed!
[*He falls and dies.*]

Bur. [*Bending over his son and kneeling.*] Marguerite, Landry made a mark on the left arm of each of them. [*He tears away Gaultier's sleeve and looks at his arm.*] You see, it is indeed they... Children damned in their mother's womb... A murder presided at their birth, a murder has shortened their life.

Marg. Mercy! Mercy!

SCÈNE V

The Same, ORSINI, SAVOISY, Guards.

Ors. [*Between two guards holding him.*] My Lord, behold the real assassins; it was they and not I.

Sav. [*Advancing.*] You are my prisoners.

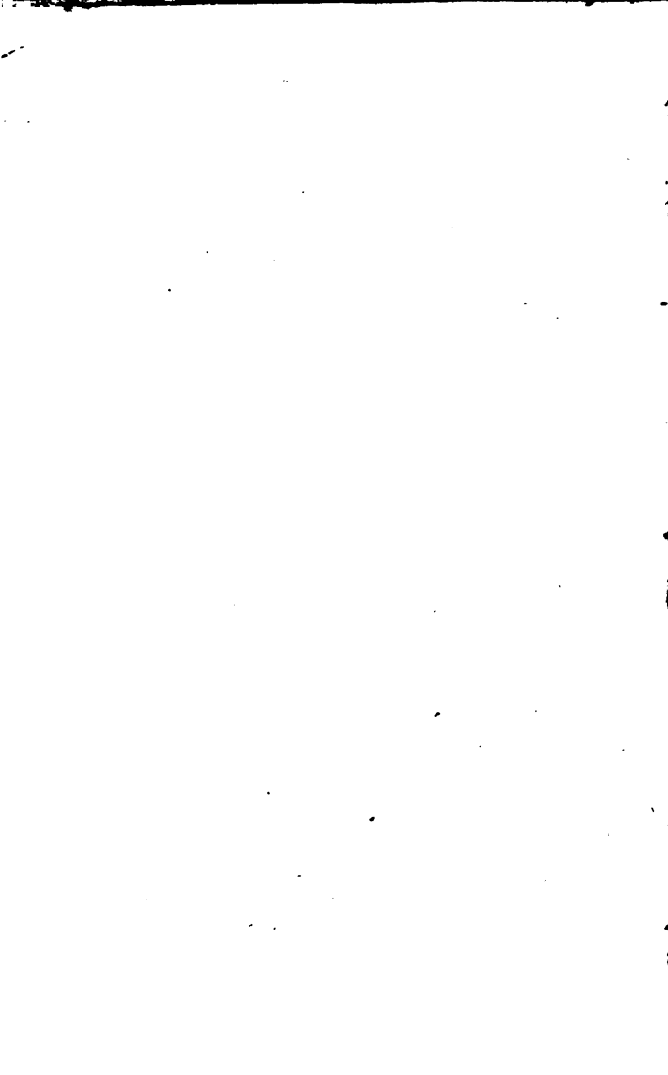
Marg. and Bur. Prisoners, we?

Marg. I, the Queen?

Bur. I, the prime minister?

Sav. Here are neither Queen nor prime minister; there are a corpse, two assassins, and the order signed by the hand of the King to arrest this night, whoever they may be, those whom I find in the Tower of Nesle.

THE END



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